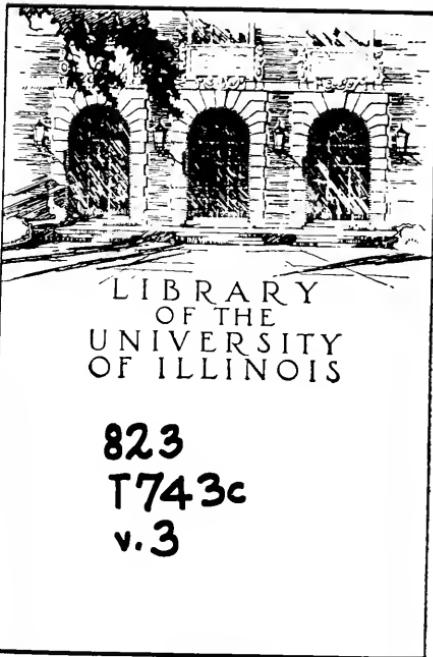


Captain Haverty's Wooing.





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CAPTAIN HAVERTY'S WOOING.

A Novel.

BY

F R A N K T R O L L O P E,

AUTHOR OF

‘BROKEN FETTERS,’ ‘THE MARKED MAN,’ ‘AN OLD MAN’S SECRET,’
‘A WOMAN’S ERROR,’ ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III

LONDON :

CHARLES J. SKEET, 10, KING WILLIAM STREET,
CHARING CROSS.

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CAPTAIN HAVERTY'S WOOING.

CHAPTER I.

GOOD-EVENING, Mister O'Brien,' said the land-lord of the Ingram Arms, in a friendly but respectful tone : for he looked upon a man who had been at the Crimea, and gone through the dreadful siege of Sebastopol, even though in the capacity of an officer's servant, as a person of no mean importance, and entitled to no small degree of deference.

'Good-evenin' Misther Bellamy,' replied Patrick O'Brien graciously; 'I hope Misthress Bellamy and the family's well?'

'Thank you, they be pretty well. How's yourself this evening?' returned Bellamy, rather at a loss how to commence the subject he wished to consult him upon.

‘Och, putty middlin’ sure,’ said Patrick cheerfully, ‘which it’s mysilf that’s thankful for; as I shall want all my hilth an’ strength too, ’afore long, to fight them murtherin’ villians o’ Saypoys over in India there.’

‘What! Be you going to India, then?’ inquired the other in astonishment. ‘Ye’re not going to fight the Sepoys, be ye?’

‘By the powers! but I am though. Sure an’ ye didn’t think now, that Patrick O’Brien was goin’ to trust his masther among them haithen villians without goin’ with him to take care o’ him when he’s fightin’ for the dear ould counthry an’ our jewel o’ a queen,—God bless her!—did ye?’

‘Oh, the captain’s agoing then, is he?’ said Bellamy.

‘Yes, sure an’ he is; an’ we laive here the day afther to-morrow.’

‘Well, I’m sorry ye be going away so soon,’ Bellamy replied, with honest regret in his face, ‘and I hope both the captain and yourself wlll soon come back again, when the war is over. But I have something I want to ask your advice on, which I was just going to take the liberty of calling and telling Colonel Haverty about, and then going to General Fielden’s. It’s about that

will of my old master, Mr. Wyndham, that there's a hundred pounds offered for.'

'Sure, an' ye don't mane that ye've found it, do ye?' exclaimed Patrick.

'No, I haven't found it; only I knows who has,' returned Bellamy.

'Och ! thin, an' it's mysilf that's mighty glad to hear the same; an' so will their honors, my masther and his respicited father !' cried Patrick gleefully. 'An' ye were goin' along to tell thim, were ye ?'

'Yes, and the general too; only we mustn't talk so loud about it on the road, in case any body coming past, should hear what we be saying, and tell them fellows; and then they would go and get the hundred pounds after all. And that's what I want to prevent,' said Bellamy cautiously.

'What fellows do ye mane, now?' inquired Patrick with a puzzled look.

'Why, them fellows as be agoing to-morrow night to take it to General Fielden, and get the hundred pounds for it, when they don't deserve to get a farthing,' replied Bellamy, adding in a low voice: 'Tom Bilson and Ted Brown, for they be the fellows I mean. At any rate Bilson is the man as has it now.'

'Och ! sure an' ye don't mane that ill-

looking thaif over the hill there ? 'said Patrick, pointing in the direction of the person in question as he spoke.

'But I do, though,' replied Bellamy, giving Patrick an account of the conversation he had overheard between Bilson and Brown, and telling him that he had left them sitting in his house, and come off to communicate the information to General Fielden, and also to Colonel Haverty in passing.

'Now, by St. Patrick ! ye've jist met with the lad that knows how to circumvint thim spalpeens without sayin' a word about it to their honors, till we've done the bit of bizness for thim two villians ourselves !' said Patrick confidently.

'Don't ye think I should go and tell the general first ?' inquired Bellamy, dubiously.

'Och ! niver a bit o' it.'

'But how about the will ?'

'Sure an' it's mysilf that'll take care o' that same ; an' as that thaif Bilson has came into possession o' it in jist the same way that ould Dan Maloney come into possession o' Pat O'Biggar's pig, an' that was without the consint o' either the owner or the pig itself, an' was relaived o' the same by his riverince, Father Proutt, who tould him it was a big

sin for him to kaip it, an' that he must give it up to kaip his sowl out o' purgatory ; so it's jist myself now that'll relaive that villian Bilson o' this same will o' Misther Wyndham's—rest his sowl !—in the same way, an' giv' a stamp recait for it, too, on that ill-looking, ugly face o' his, into the bargain,' said Patrick O'Brien, with a mischievous laugh.

‘ But won’t it be agin the law to do that ? I don’t see how it can be done, though, Misther O’Brien.’

‘ Och ! laive that to me--an’ to Providence,’ said Patrick. ‘ But here they come, the thavish villians,’ he added as he observed Bilson and Brown approaching from the village, for it was in the outskirts that the above conversation took place between Patrick O’Brien and the landlord of the Ingram Arms. They immediately turned round and walked quietly away in the opposite direction, and in a few minutes were overtaken by the two worthy confreres, who, in the dusk, did not at first recognise them. Just, however, as they were passing Patrick and his companion Bilson gave a fierce, sulky look from under his slouching hat at the former, though evidently without observing who the latter

was, and muttered to Brown with a coarse oath, loud enough to be heard by the person alluded to :

‘ Why, Ted here’s that Irishman, that struck my dog, that I told ye about.’

‘ Then —— it, why doan’t yee strike him for it again,’ returned Brown.

It was not Patrick O’Brien’s intention to have noticed Bilson and his companion now, but hearing allusions of this kind made about himself, and as if intended, too, for him to hear, was more than he deemed becoming his honour to submit to without remark. Fearing, however, that Bellamy might be in the way, he hastily wished him good-evening, and walked on by himself, a few steps behind the other two, wishing to get a little further away from the village before he took any notice of their remarks. But Bellamy, probably suspecting Patrick’s intentions, after going back a short distance, as if returning home, altered his plan and followed, taking care to avoid being seen himself, but never losing sight of Patrick and the two men before him.

‘ Now, yee infernal Irishman, what the —— du yee want following us?’ asked Bilson fiercely, turning round upon O’Brien in a quiet part of the road where it was a good

deal darkened by high banks on each side and shadowed by thick fir-trees.

‘Sure, now, haven’t I as good a right to the quain’s highway road as ye have, or any body else?’ said Patrick with a dangerous smile.

‘No, ye ha’n’t, unless it is your own —— country,’ replied Bilson with another oath, mistaking Patrick’s composure for fear, and no doubt emboldened by having a companion with him. ‘What the —— did yee mean by strikin’ my dog, yee Irish blackguard?’ he demanded with a volley of oaths, and a threatening look.

‘Mane? Why, to taich it how to behave itsilf in future, to be sure!’ returned the Irishman with feigned composure.

‘Well, —— yee, I’ve a good mind to teach yee something for yer pains,’ retorted Bilson fiercely.

‘Sure now, an’ it’s mysilf that would jist like a little o’ that same taichin’ if convainint,’ rejoined Patrick with a provoking grin.

‘Oi say, Tom, why doan’t ye floor the —— Irishman,’ said Brown with a coarse laugh and a coarser oath. ‘There’s nobody near and oi’ll see fair play.’

No doubt Bilson understood this offer of

seeing fair play, to mean a promise of assistance if it should be required : at all events he immediately after turned round again upon Patrick, and said more fiercely than before :

‘ Now yee Irish blackguard, I’ve a good mind to break that —— head o’ yourn.’

‘ Sure an’ ye wouldn’t be so undacent as that, would ye ?’

‘ Curse your Irish brogue ! Take that,’ cried Bilson, suddenly aiming a heavy blow at Patrick’s face, which he was too old a soldier not to be prepared for.

‘ Och ! an’ it’s fightin’ yer afther, is it ?’ he exclaimed, stepping aside and avoiding the blow. ‘ Well, now, I’m jist the boy that can accommidate ye in that same.’ So saying he let fly right and left at Bilson with a precision and force which both astonished and staggered him.

‘ Yee Irish ——, I’ll give it yee for that now !’ muttered Bilson fiercely, with a terrible oath, preparing to strike again, though evidently with no little secret misgiving in his own mind, and serious qualms at the heart.

‘ Come on, then, an’ don’t keep me waitin’ too long for it,’ replied Patrick coolly follow-

ing his opponent up, who already began to give ground and shift about, backward.

Bilson again struck at O'Brien, but with no better result; for the Irishman easily turned his blows aside and made his own knuckles rattle upon the head of his adversary.

Like all ruffians and bullies, Bilson was a clumsy coward, and already would have given in; but Patrick, who now had his own reasons for continuing the contest, was resolved that he should not.

‘Sure now, an’ ye had better get yer friend there to come an’ be ready to lift yer ugly carcass up, for I mane to see how much ground it covers,’ said he in a mocking tone, and the next moment he sent his antagonist sprawling on his head upon the road.

‘Now, Brown, —— yu!’ cried Bilson—‘why don’t yu come an’ see fair play, and not let this —— Irishman strike me when I am down?’

‘Oi didn’t see him a strikin’ on yu down,’ replied Brown gruffly, approaching. ‘Now be off wi’ yu!’ said he, addressing Patrick threateningly.

‘That’s right, Ted,’ said Bilson, springing to his feet. ‘Pitch into the ——, an’ we’ll take the impudence out o’ him.’

Just, however, as the two were about to close on poor O'Brien, Bellamy, who had kept aloof while the contest was between the two, now came forward.

‘Hollo!’ cried he, stepping before Brown; ‘two to one is not fair play. Stand back, Brown.’

‘What the —— have ye any business to interfere for?’ demanded that fellow, with a brace of fierce imprecations. ‘What business ha’ ye to come here an’ interferin’ wi’ us?’

‘Quite as much as ye have to be attacking one man, the two of you.’

‘Och, niver mind, Misther Bellamy,’ cried Patrick, with perfect indifference. ‘I’m jist the boy that can manage a couple o’ cowardly spalpeens like thim! There, that’s the way Patrick O’Brien taiches unmannerly blaguards like thim how to behave thimsilves!’ he added, at the same moment sending Bilson again down flat on his back upon the hard road. ‘Sure now an’ I hope ye don’t find that bed o’ yours too hard an’ uncomfortable?’ he said, with mocking coolness.

‘Lift me up!’ cried Bilson fiercely. ‘Brown, what the —— d’ye stand there for, like a —— coward, and not come and keep this fellow off me?’

But Brown had too much respect for his own person to make any attempt at interference.

‘Why, he isn’t upon *yu*,’ replied Brown.

‘Sure now ye had better come an’ lift up yer comrade, an’ giv me the pleasure o’ knockin’ him down agin,’ said Patrick. ‘It’s inconvainint for me to be kept waitin’ so long in the cowld.’

‘Well, Ted, if *yu* aren’t goin’ to see fair play, I shall give it up,’ said Bilson, again getting up, and shrinking back, trying to get away; but this Patrick was not quite disposed to allow at present.

‘Sure now as *ye*’ve givin’ me the throuble o’ knockin’ *ye* down, *ye*’ll give me something for it afore *ye* go !’ said he, banteringly.

‘No, I don’t want any more,’ replied Bilson, stooping to pick up his hat, and, putting it on his head, prepared to walk away.

‘Och, by dad ! but it’s *mysilf* that wants something from *ye*,’ said Patrick, taking hold of him by the collar of the coat.

‘What d’*ye* want ? I ha’n’t nothing belonging to *yee*,’ said Bilson, evidently afraid of another knock-down.

‘Haven’t *ye* ? But *ye*’ve something in

that pocket o' yours that I mane to release ye of, an' take it to thim that it belongs to,' returned Patrick, feeling a paper packet bend beneath his gripe as he slightly shook the rascal by the collar.

'There's nothing there that belongs to either yee or anybody else,' replied Bilson, in an alarmed voice.

'Och, now don't be thinkin' to decaive me, afther I've had the throubble o' knockin' ye down,' said Patrick; 'for it's myself that knows better than that. I want that paice o' paper ye have in yer pocket, here, with the will written on it, that's all.'

'What will? I've no will in my pocket; an' if I had, it isn't yourn.'

'No, by dad! Patrick O'Brien hasn't made his will yet. But there's the will o' a gintleman in yer pocket here that I mane to have afore I wish ye good-night. So out wi' it.'

'No, I shan't. It isn't yourn, an' yee shan't have it,' said Bilson, trying to shake off Patrick's grip.

'Be aisy now,' said the Irishman, repeating the shaking operation, 'an' give me the will afore I give ye another dose o' that same midcine I've jist let ye have a tastin' ov.'

'It isn't yourn, I tell you,' said the other,

evidently by no means relishing the prospect of another knock-down.

‘Sure, an’ I know that; only I want to give it to thim it does belong to. Och, ye durty spalpeen! to go an’ stail the will o’ the dead man, an’ keep it from the widdy?’ said Patrick, shaking him violently.

‘I didn’t steal it?’

‘How did ye git it, then, if ye didn’t stail it?’

‘I found it.’

‘An’ where, now, did ye find it?’ asked Patrick, looking him firmly in the face.

‘Why, what’s that to you?’

‘Because, sure, an’ I want to know.’

‘I found it, I tell you.’

‘Where might that be, I want to know?’

‘You’ve nothing to do with it, an’ I shan’t tell you,’ said Bilson, obstinately.

‘Sure, thin, I think I can make ye,’ returned Patrick, giving him a sharp slap upon the side of the face with his open hand. ‘Ye villain, ye stole it! that’s the raison ye’re afeared to tell me,’ he added.

‘No, I didn’t,’ said the other, whining. ‘I tell you I found it, an’ am going to get the hundred pounds reward that’s offered for it.’

‘Och! bad luck to ye, ye unmannerly

thaif! ye know ye stole it, an' are afeared to take it back yerself; an' were goin' to sind it to his honour the general by this other brother thaif o' yours, to get the hunder pounds,' said Patrick.

‘No, I didn’t; I picked it up among the rubbish the mornin’ after the fire.’

‘An’ ye’ve kept it all this time in yer possiission!’ exclaimed Patrick, scarcely able to refrain striking him again. ‘Och, by the powers, if ye don’t give it up to me without anither word, I’ll be the death o’ ye!’

‘I’m going to give it up to-morrow.’

‘Sure now, an’ it’s myself that’ll relaive ye o’ that same throubble.’

‘But what right have you to rob me of the reward that’s offer’d for it?’

‘Och, jist the same right that ye had to stail it.’

‘But I didn’t steal it. I found it at Bilford Hall, among some rubbish, after the house was burn’d down.’

‘An’ what bizness had ye there, I should like to know; an’ if ye did, why didn’t ye give it up to the widdy? Out with it, ye spalpeen! or I’ll have ye transported for a thaif an’ a robber as ye are!’ cried Patrick, again quickening the fellow by another sharp

application of his flat hand on the side of his face.

Still Bilson refused to give it up, and, as Patrick was determined to have it, he again had recourse to his knuckles, and sent Bilson reeling back against the hedge, who, in the desperation of the moment, made an attempt to strike back, and close with his tormenting adversary. A short scuffle ensued, during which the paper fell from Bilson's pocket, who in vain tried to trample upon it, and tear it with his feet, at the same time calling upon Brown to come forward and pick it up ; but Bellamy drew himself up before that worthy in a manner which he evidently did not at all like, and contented himself by telling Bilson he might do it himself, for he would have nothing to do with the — thing.

‘There now,’ cried O’Brien, giving Bilson a heavy blow upon the forehead, and again knocking him back against the hedge ; ‘that’s a stamp recait for it !’ he added, at the same time stooping and picking up the will, which he put carefully into his pocket ; after which he continued : ‘now, ye durty thaif, if ye think ye’ve any right to have the reward, come on wi’ me to his honour, General

Fielden's, an' see if he'll give ye the hundred pound for stailin' this will, an' kaipin' it in yer possission so long.'

So saying, Patrick O'Brien and Bellamy walked away, leaving the two rascals standing on the road, breathing curses and imprecations upon them. Bilson—knowing that the moment General Fielden was aware the will had been in his possession, he would recollect having seen him pick it up from among the ruins of Bilford Hall the morning after the fire—did not deem it at all a likely thing the hundred pounds reward would be given to him, without his being able to give something like a satisfactory account of the manner by which it came into his possession. He, therefore, in the bitterness of his rage and disappointment, after sending a volley of curses after Patrick O'Brien, began to abuse and swear at his companion for not helping to prevent the will from being taken from him.

We will, however, leave them to settle the matter between themselves, and proceed with our narrative.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Patrick O'Brien and the innkeeper arrived at General Fielden's, without any hesitation they related to him not only the mode by which they had gained possession of the will, but also how they became acquainted with the fact that Bilson had it, although Patrick acknowledged, at the same time, that he had not intended either trying to take it from him then, or in the way he did, or at all interfered with Bilson if that worthy had not used insulting and provoking language to him in passing, and that his determination to have the will from him before he let him go, was only the result of Bilson's own conduct to him.

O'Brien having generously refused to accept any reward for his services in recovering the will, honest Bellamy did the same.

The general, however, prevailed upon them to receive a ten pound note each ; but a fraction more neither of them would hear of, and it was with great reluctance they accepted what they did.

The moment they were gone, General Fielden sat down to read the will, and his joy at its recovery was considerably damped at its contents with respect to Blanche. That she should have been well provided for, was nothing more than what he had expected, but that her name should have been coupled with James Murray's, as it was in the will by her father, was both unexpected and perplexing ; for it plainly implied a wish, and that, too, of the most sacred kind, that she should marry that gentleman. Although, in his mind, the general had no doubt whatever, but that at the moment of his death Mr. Wyndham's feelings were completely changed, and that nothing was further from his wishes than that Blanche should marry James Murray. His treatment of him, when he presented himself before him on the morning of the day he expired, quite convinced him of this. Still here was the will, evidently made, too, only a few weeks before he died, in which the strongest possible evidence ex-

isted of the intention and desire of Mr. Wyndham that his daughter should become the wife of Mr. James Murray. For himself he would not have hesitated to act upon what he knew to be the last wishes of his deceased friend, and disregard those in the will. But would Mrs. Wyndham consider herself justified in doing so likewise? Would she not feel as if the implied desire of her husband expressed here was almost a sacred obligation, which she was called upon to fulfil? And would not Blanche herself, with all her repugnance to Mr. Murray, regard it in the same light, and, at whatever sacrifice to her own feelings and happiness, consider herself bound to obey what might now be almost deemed the dying words of her father? It might possibly be so. Still the general, true to his promise to become the guide and guardian of the young lady, resolved, as far as in him lay, to prevent a union which he felt sure would be so pregnant with misfortune and wretchedness to poor Blanche and her mother also.

The perfect, strong, moral conviction the general had, that, had Mr. Wyndham lived, he would himself have been the very last to wish for such an alliance, after what he had

seen of James Murray's character, all the more strengthened him in this resolution. Still, he felt both distressed and perplexed at the painful and awkward position in which he found himself placed. And, before acquainting Mrs. Wyndham that the will had been discovered, he made up his mind to consult Colonel Haverty at once upon the subject.

Fearful of betraying himself to Mrs. Wyndham he merely sent a message to her in the drawing-room, where she and Blanche were—the interview between himself and Patrick O'Brien and Bellamy having taken place in his own small sitting-room or study—that he had just heard some news with which he wished at once to acquaint Colonel Haverty, and had gone to call upon him for that purpose, but would be back again in the course of an hour or so. Putting on his hat and military cloak, with his cane in his hand, he went out and took his way toward his friend's house, though it was now both dark and getting late in the evening.

‘How do you do, Mrs. Haverty?’ said the general, as he was shewn into the room where the colonel and his wife were sitting. ‘I’m afraid you’ll think me a rather late

visitor ; but I wanted to have a little chat with your husband,' said he, glancing respectfully at a book Mrs. Haverty closed as he entered, from which she had been reading to her husband.

‘ Your visits are always very acceptable to us at any time, general,’ replied Mrs. Haverty shaking hands with him.

‘ I’m delighted to see you, general !’ exclaimed the colonel, shaking him warmly by the hand ; ‘ and so glad to know poor Mr. Wyndham’s will has been found. My son’s servant has just informed me of it.’

‘ How stupid I was not to have suspected that fellow Bilson before,’ returned the general. ‘ I remember quite well seeing him pick up something at the ruins, the morning after the fire, and putting it into his pocket, and I even asked him what it was, as he was going away, and he said it was nothing. But I’ve no doubt, now, it was the will which the rascal has kept all this time, no doubt in the hope of getting a reward for it.’

‘ Well, the scoundrel deserves his disappointment ; I suppose he knew well enough what it was,’ remarked the colonel.

‘ Oh, he could not help knowing that—

and very likely the contents too, as it was inscribed outside: "The Last Will and Testament of Edward¹ Wyndham, Esq.," and was only fastened by a piece of red tape tied round it.'

'I suppose Mrs. Wyndham is very pleased that it has been found,' remarked the colonel.

'She does not know it yet; I had only received it a few minutes before I came out, and had just time to glance over its contents before I started. I see I am one of the executors, as Mr. Wyndham gave me to understand I should be, a short time before he died; and Mrs. Wyndham is the other.'

'I hope you find everything agreeable and satisfactory in it,' said Colonel Haverty, observing something like hesitation in the manner of the general.

'Yes, it's all simple enough, and plain also. Only there are one or two things in it that I should have been much better pleased not to have found.'

'Indeed! I'm sorry to hear it,' rejoined the colonel, with a slightly surprised look; while Mrs. Haverty, without appearing to do so on purpose, quietly went out of the room, and left them to themselves.

'Oh, I am afraid I have driven your wife

out of the room. But perhaps it is better we should be by ourselves, as I want to consult you about one or two things in the will. Where is your son?

‘He went off a little before dark to the railway station to answer a telegraphic message from Sir Colin Campbell which he had just received, informing him that his gallant old leader was going out as commander-in-chief to India, and asking him if he would accept a staff appointment. William said he should call on you the first thing in the morning to let you and the ladies know,’ said the colonel.

‘Well, I’m delighted to hear that!’ replied General Fielden, enthusiastically. ‘William has, of course, accepted the appointment.’

‘Yes, and has gone to telegraph his acceptance to Sir Colin, as he wished him to do at once.’

‘Now the gallant old hero will show the world what a splendid genius has been so long prevented from displaying itself in its full glory!’ exclaimed the general.

‘If there is a man in the British army capable of saving India, it is Sir Colin Campbell. I hope God will spare him to

accomplish that great task,' said the colonel, earnestly.

‘I hope so too; and that your son will also be spared; and return to gladden your heart and his good, kind mother’s, with still higher honours and distinctions than those he has already gained.’

‘We hope God will spare him. Both my dear wife and myself feel very much at parting with him again. But “His will be done.”’

‘I am glad he is not within now, as it may, perhaps, be as well not to say anything to him about the contents of the will.’

‘Indeed! Is there something in it that you think would be disappointing to him?’

‘Humph! Perhaps there is. Read it and see,’ said the general gravely, handing him the will, which the colonel, after putting on his spectacles, began to read; an expression of surprise and disappointment showing itself in his face as he did so.

‘Well, what do you think of it?’

‘It seems all simple enough, only I am sorry to see that Mr. James Murray’s name is in it in connection with poor Blanche’s.’

‘So am I ; and that’s what I feel so much at a loss about ; and why I fear to show the will to Mrs. Wyndham.’

‘You do not think, then, that she will be inclined to carry out that portion of her husband’s instructions with respect to Blanche ?’

‘I hardly know what to think of it. This will appears to have been made about a month before Mr. Wyndham’s death ; and at that time, I believe it was his intention that his daughter should marry Mr. James Murray. But I believe at the time of his death, Mr. Wyndham had completely changed his intentions and wishes on that subject. When Murray called to see him the morning after the fire, the scene, I understood, was painful in the extreme, and the agitation and excitement caused by it, as I have told you before, was, I have no hesitation in saying, one of the main causes of our poor friend’s sudden death. He expressed, too, the greatest satisfaction, not only in my presence, but also in that of Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche, that he had not been taken away before he was able to undo the injustice which he had been doing his daughter in trying to force her to marry a man she so utterly disliked,

and who he was now so fully convinced was unworthy of her.'

'Yes, I have understood that he quite changed his views; as well as his opinion of Mr. James Murray before he died.'

'Oh, certainly: but, unfortunately, here is his will, made only a month before his death, in which he not only recognises and approves of Murray's suit, but leaves ten thousand pounds to his daughter when she marries him, which, of course, is just the same as leaving it to him under that condition, for the moment she marries him it becomes his.'

'Yes; but if she does not marry him, he cannot claim it.'

'No; but it's the implied wish conveyed in the bequest, that I look at: for it clearly shows the wishes and intentions of Mr. Wyndham at the time the will was made. And its having been made so very recently before his death, too, it reads like the expression of the last wishes and desires he had upon the subject. And although nothing could be clearer than his aversion to Murray before his death, yet with this strong expression of his approval of that gentleman's pretensions to his daughter so shortly before

it, I hardly know what Mrs. Wyndham may think. For my own part, I shall have no hesitation in using all the influence I possess in opposing any advances Mr. Murray might make, should he again attempt to renew them. But in spite of her own feelings, I am only afraid lest Mrs. Wyndham should deem this implied wish of her husband's entails a duty upon her which she may think herself bound to fulfil. At all events it is a recognition of James Murray's claims upon Blanche Wyndham, that I am very sorry to see.'

'So am I. I wonder if that fellow Bilson who has had it so long in his possession, has shown it to Murray, or told him any of its contents,' said the colonel. 'I've understood there is rather more intimacy between them than is usual in men of such different stations in life.'

'Yes, there is ; and it is said too, that Murray's intimacy extends even beyond the fellow himself, or, perhaps is less with him than his better half !' returned the general. 'But, be that as it may, I have no doubt Murray knows perfectly well the contents of this will, and I have equally little doubt but he will endeavour to secure the benefit

he will derive from it if he can marry Blanche Wyndham.'

'But she won't marry him, will she ?'

'Not willingly. But I don't know what effect this may have with both herself and her mother, if Murray really should endeavour to renew his attentions, and urge this as a proof of Mr. Wyndham's approval.'

'Yes, but there's the opinion Mr. Wyndham expressed just before his death, and his thankfulness that he was enabled to undo the injustice he had been doing to his daughter in trying to force her into a marriage with Mr. Murray. Surely that will be sufficient to convince them that Mr. Wyndham did not wish to carry out the marriage, although at the time his will was made it is evident enough that was his desire.'

'I hope so. And as far as lies in my power, as executor of this will, and the guardian and friend of Blanche and her mother, I will certainly do my utmost to oppose any feeling of this kind, should they really have it ; for I have too much regard for them both to look upon a union between Blanche and Murray with anything but the most positive conviction of her future wretchedness. Not only because I know

her heart is fixed upon one so much worthier of her, and who, I believe, deeply and truly loves her in return ; but that this James Murray is not only utterly repugnant to her and perfectly incapable of either appreciating or loving a young, noble-hearted, pure-minded woman, but that his coarse, rude, pompous manners, mean spirit, and, I fear, low tastes and vices, as well as his selfishness, and his age too ; utterly unfit him for the fellowship and affection of a young, gentle, loving heart like Blanche Wyndham's.'

' But I hope there's no fear of such a misfortune falling upon her as that.'

' I trust not, only I know both she and her mother hold the memory of Mr. Wyndham in such affectionate reverence, that they would consider the performance of any wish expressed by him, as the most sacred duty. And although poor Wyndham just before his death, did speak so differently with respect to this, yet the written expression of his wishes here is so solemn and impressive that it seems to outweigh what was only spoken. However, I have no doubt in my own mind as to Mr. Wyndham's wishes on the subject, and will do all I can, if it is requisite, to give Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche

the same feeling. I am glad you agree with me in the view I take of the matter, and when I go back, I will give the will to Mrs. Wyndham to read, and consult with her, before I say anything to Blanche on the subject of its contents. And as I know William's feelings with respect to Blanche, I have been thinking, especially as he is going off so soon, it would be better not to say anything about the contents of the will to him at present.'

'Thank you, general, for your consideration for my son's feelings. Poor boy! I should be sorry if he left home with so heavy and unexpected a disappointment as that upon his heart. Better not to tell him.'

'I think so, too. But we mustn't dwell too much on this. I can scarcely imagine Murray will have the impudence to regard this as any plea in his favour after what has occurred; only I felt a little uneasy and vexed at seeing it, and was anxious to have your opinion and advice before shewing it to Mrs. Wyndham.'

Mrs. Haverty now re-entered the room, and, having chatted a few minutes with her, General Fielden shortly afterwards took his leave and pursued his way back to his own house.

CHAPTER III

WHEN General Fielden returned home he found Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche still in the drawing-room.

‘Well, my dear ladies,’ said he, as he entered, ‘I have good news for you. The will has been found !’

An exclamation of glad surprise was the instant reply of both Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter.

‘Oh, general, I am so glad to hear it !’ said Mrs. Wyndham. ‘Have you got it ?’

‘Yes, it has been brought to me, this evening,’ he replied: and in a few words related to them what the reader already knows as to the means by which the will had been recovered.

‘I hope you find everything simple and straightforward in it, general?’ remarked Mrs. Wyndham.

‘Oh, yes; everything is very plain and straightforward,’ replied the general, concealing all appearance of anxiety. ‘You and I are the executors, as we expected. But we shall have to look it over together presently, if you like, as it will be necessary for you to understand it as well as myself, and I may want your advice and opinion upon some portions of it: or, perhaps, you would prefer leaving it till the morning,’ he added, half suggestively.

‘No, I should like to read it at once if agreeable to you.’

‘Well, it’s in my study: shall I bring it, or would you like to go there and read it?’ he replied in a half careless tone.

‘Oh, just as you like, general. Would you like to hear it, dear,’ said Mrs. Wyndham addressing her daughter, who was busy working the initial letters of a name, in red silk, upon a white cambric pocket-handkerchief intended for William Haverty.

‘No, mamma dear, thank you, I am afraid I should only disturb you and General Fielden,’ she said half sadly.

‘Well, we shan’t be long, I dare say, my dear?’ returned her mother as she rose to leave the room.

‘No, not very. We shall soon read it over,’ rejoined the general, opening the door and leading the way into his own small room, glad that he had succeeded in getting Mrs. Wyndham to read the will by herself without exciting the fears of her daughter that he had any motive in doing so.

‘Shall I read it to you, Mrs. Wyndham? Or would you prefer doing so yourself?’ he inquired as he sat down at a small table, where she had already taken a seat.

‘If you would be so kind as to read it, general, I should be much obliged,’ she replied in a slightly agitated voice.

Without comment or preface, General Fielden accordingly read the will, which Mrs. Wyndham listened to with deep attention and a good deal of sad emotion, but without speaking. For some moments after the general had finished reading there was a dead pause. At length he remarked :

‘You see my motive, I suppose, for not wishing Blanche to be present when we read this, Mrs. Wyndham?’

‘I do, and thank you for your kind consideration,’ she replied, for he had guessed her thoughts.

‘Poor Blanche!’ she sighed, after a short,

sad pause. 'It is well she did not hear this.'

'You allude, of course, to the clause relating to herself and Mr. Murray.'

'Yes. Oh, why should my poor husband have left us such a legacy of unhappiness as that?' she rejoined, sorrowfully.

'You will, of course, allow me to discuss this freely with you, Mrs. Wyndham,' said the general, in a friendly tone of half apology.

'Oh yes, general; and I shall be most thankful for your advice and counsel on so painful and difficult a subject.'

'Well, I do not think, Mrs. Wyndham, that this need cause you so much anxiety and unhappiness as you seem to anticipate. The will, as the date shows, was made somewhere about a month before Mr. Wyndham's death. At that time it was arranged, I believe, that your daughter should marry Mr. James Murray; and thus it is that their names are coupled together as they are here: and, I presume, it is on this account that your uneasiness arises,' said the general, pausing for a moment.

'Yes, after all that has passed, to think that my poor husband should have imposed

upon me the task of giving my dear child to that James Murray is very hard !

‘But I do not think, Mrs. Wyndham, that he wished you to do this. Mr. Wyndham expresses no desire to that effect. He merely recognises the probable occurrence of an event, which was intended to take place at the time he made his will. But there is no injunction upon you to carry out what was then only contemplated,’ urged the general. ‘And then, you know how altered poor Mr. Wyndham’s feelings were upon the subject before he died, and how glad he was that he was able to break off the engagement with Mr. Murray. The words he made use of in my presence, and much more so the interview which took place between your husband and James Murray, are more than enough to convince me that he had completely changed his wishes and his intentions upon the subject.’

‘I know just before his death he did express very great aversion to Mr. Murray ; and the sad incidents of the last few hours of his life had great effect upon his mind in inducing him to alter his determination respecting Blanche ; but with so strong a written proof of his wishes and intentions as

this, I hardly know how to act. I should never be happy if I did anything I thought contrary to what he wished me to do, or not acted in accordance with his intentions; nor would Blanche herself; and, deeply and strongly averse as we both are to James Murray, I should feel it only due to the memory of my poor husband to carry out his wishes in marrying my dear daughter to that gentleman, if I thought that such was his desire when he died.'

There was a sad firmness in Mrs. Wyndham's voice as she said this that was very painful to listen to.

'My dear Mrs. Wyndham,' exclaimed the general, kindly; 'I have no hesitation whatever in saying that I firmly believe nothing could be more obnoxious to both the memory of your husband and the happiness of yourself and your daughter than to do this! Even had Mr. Wyndham given us less positive assurance to the contrary, the conduct of James Murray, not only at the fire, but on the melancholy occasion when he called here is, of itself, sufficient to justify you in, at once and for ever, dispelling all uncertainty upon the subject—especially when the question concerns the happiness of your daughter on

the one hand, and her wretchedness and perhaps untimely death on the other—for though I believe she would comply without murmuring with whatever wishes her father might have expressed respecting her, and which you might deem it her duty to obey, yet you must be well aware that such a sacrifice as that of becoming the wife of James Murray, would be the sacrifice of a broken heart and an early grave.'

General Fielden spoke with a deep earnest energy and pathos which caused his own voice to tremble, and brought tears into the eyes of Mrs. Wyndham.

Again there was a short pause.

'Do you think it likely, then, that Mr. Murray will attempt to renew his suit?' inquired Mrs. Wyndham, at length breaking silence.

'As I have no doubt but he has seen the will, and read its contents, I think it is very likely he will. But it will be entirely our own fault if he gets any encouragement; and I am determined he shall have none from me, at least; as I am so confident that if Mr. Wyndham had now been alive, he would have been the very last to have given him any himself.'

‘Mr. James Murray has no claim upon my husband’s property unless he marries my daughter, has he?’

‘No, none whatever. It is only if he marries Blanche that he has any interest or authority in the matter; and it is only for this that he is likely to wish to marry her.’

‘Well, he shall not do so with my consent. The money he would have I care little about; and, if I believed it was my husband’s intention that he should have the ten thousand pounds, I would, without hesitation, give it him, much as I dislike him; but my daughter he cannot—shall not have! No, no! I cannot think my husband would have wished Blanche to marry that man if he had been now alive, after what has happened!’

‘You are quite right, Mrs. Wyndham. I should be as unwilling to do anything contrary to what I believed to be the wishes and intentions of Mr. Wyndham as yourself, and I firmly believe we should be acting contrary to both if we attempted to carry out that, now happily broken-off, marriage between your daughter and Mr. Murray. We shall, therefore, consider this matter settled. If that gentleman should try to renew his suit, as to be candid with you I

have strong suspicions he will, if you leave it in my hands I daresay I shall have no difficulty in convincing him of the folly of his pretensions.'

'You have my free and full consent to exercise all the power you have to prevent any renewal of that man's unwelcome attentions. I leave it entirely in your hands, feeling quite sure that your only object is the happiness of myself and my daughter, and the carrying out the wishes of my poor husband,' said Mrs. Wyndham, in a tone of hearty confidence.

'You may rest assured that whatever I do will be in strict accordance with the will of your husband, as well as for your and your daughter's happiness. You agree with me, I suppose, that it is better Blanche should not know anything of the contents of the will, for the present at all events ?'

'Yes, quite. Let us spare her that unhappiness if we can,' replied Mrs. Wyndham earnestly, who, seeing the general folding up the will and lock it in an iron box for security, rose from her chair and returned with him to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

NEXT day was the last William Haverty had to spend at home with his parents before his departure for India. He was to start early on the following morning for London, by the train from Westdon. His preparations were all made, and everything was now ready for his departure. Soon after breakfast he walked to General Fielden's to see Blanche and Mrs. Wyndham, intending to call again in the evening to bid them a final good-bye ; after which he called to receive the adieux of his friends in the neighbourhood, and returned to an early dinner with his father and mother.

It was a sad meal, that last dinner of William Haverty with his parents before his departure for India. In vain the young man exerted himself to look cheerful, and keep up

the spirits of his gentle-hearted mother and kind old father. Poor Mrs. Haverty could only sit and gaze wistfully and sadly in the face of her son, whom she might, perhaps, never again see sitting at that table with her; and the gallant old colonel several times fairly broke down in his attempts to comfort her, and gave vent to his own feelings in violent bursts of irrestrainable emotion.

In spite of his devotion to his profession, and his sense of duty to his country, William Haverty felt his approaching separation from his parents with a sad, sinking sensation at the heart, which even the least sensitive of us have felt at times in parting from those we love, and who, perhaps, we may never more see in this world. Still, he heroically strove to conceal his own deep emotions and to keep up the spirits of his father and mother, and tried to turn their thoughts to any subject but that of his departure. The dinner, however, was, as we have said, a very sad one. Scarcely a mouthful of anything was eaten by either of the three, and it was almost a relief to William when it was over and he could leave the table, and, under pretence of wishing to do something upstairs, go up to his own room and give vent to his

pent-up feelings in a few strong convulsive throbs of over-mastering emotion.

In the evening he went to see Blanche Wyndham for the last time, and to wish her good-bye, as the hour at which he was to start next day was too early to allow him to see her in the morning. Mrs. Wyndham received him with her usual calm interest and friendly feeling, Blanche with all the deep affection of her warm, truthful nature and trustful love. He found them by themselves when he entered, General Fielden having purposely left the room, when he heard the ring at the bell, that they might have some conversation without his being present. Blanche had some embroidery-work in her hand, and her mother had the 'Good Book' before her, from which she had evidently been reading.

'So, William, the time has arrived when we must again wish you a long good-bye, and you must once more go forth to fight the enemies of our country,' said Mrs. Wyndham, after the first greeting was over, and they had taken their seats, trying to look and speak cheerfully.

'Yes. In a few hours I shall be off. By the time you are up in the morning, I

expect to be dashing along on the road to London.'

'What time does the train start from Westdon, William?' asked Blanche, with a quiet look of half sad, yet hopeful affection.

'Half-past six is the first train,' he replied, returning her glance with a tender smile; 'and I hope to reach London about one o'clock.'

'We shall be very sad without you, I am afraid, when you're gone,' remarked Mrs. Wyndham, in a regretful tone. 'I hope God will spare you to return to us again, after this dreadful mutiny is over! We shall often think of you, and pray for you,' she added with restrained agitation.

'And I trust God will keep you in good health, and all happiness till I return, which I hope will not be so very long,' said William trying to conceal his own emotion under a cheerful air.

'How long do you think it will be before you come back again, William?' inquired Blanche.

'Not more than two or three years, I hope,' said he with constrained cheerfulness.

'Two or three years!' replied Blanche in a sad tone, feeling that to be separated so

long from him she loved, was indeed a dreary prospect to look forward to. ‘Oh ! what a long time that is !’ she added with a deep sigh.

‘I shall indeed feel it so, I’m afraid, to be away from you, dear Blanche. I shall long for the day when I can return again and receive the welcome of those I love.’

‘And then those Sepoys are such awfully cruel creatures. It is not like going to fight against civilized men, who do not kill people in cold blood, if they fall into their hands ; or murder them after they are wounded, like those Indians.’

‘Well, that is not a subject that I am at all uneasy about. There’s far less danger to be apprehended from such cruel savages as these, than from better disciplined and more civilized soldiers as we found in the Crimea ; the latter may be every whit as remorsefully cruel to their prisoners or the wounded that fall into their hands, and are far more formidable from their superior discipline, and the intelligence of their leaders, if not their own ; whereas, the others, I believe, are far too great cowards to give us much trouble in a fight, and we shall take good care not to expose ourselves to their cruelty in any other way.’

‘Oh, I hope you will not expose yourself to any risk of falling into their hands?’ said Blanche, anxiously.

‘Never fear that. I shall take care that I am well protected by my brave Ninety-third wherever I go?’ he returned, smiling.

‘How do you think our house is getting on, William?’ asked Mrs. Wyndham, after a brief silence.

‘Very well, I think. I suppose you expect to have it finished by the end of this year?’

‘Yes, the contractor is bound to have it completed by the last day of December; though it will be two or three months after that, I dare say, before it is fit for living in. We shall be settled nicely in it, and all comfortable, I hope, when you come back.’

‘I hope so too. General Fielden will see to everything being done properly and finished in good time, I dare say,’ replied William.

‘Yes, I’ve no doubt of that: his kindness and attention to us is beyond expression. I trust God will reward him for all his goodness to us,’ rejoined Mrs. Wyndham, fervently.

‘He is certainly a most generous, noble-

hearted man !' said William, with warm sincerity. ' You know about that thousand pounds he offered at the fire. Well, he has never allowed me to rest till I have at length consented to let him lay aside five hundred pounds of it to purchase plate for me and some one else,' he said, looking archly at Blanche, who met his glance with a flushed smile of modest happiness, ' when I come back ; and the other five hundred he has invested for the benefit of Patrick O'Brien : he and myself being the trustees.'

' Ay, he's far too generous at times, I'm afraid. It is fortunate he has no family, or I fear he would have to be less liberal with others, than his generous nature would prompt him to be very often ; for rich man though he is, he must spend nearly the whole of his income in his liberality to other people. I am sure we are quite ashamed to stay here so long, but he will not hear of our leaving his house till our own is ready for us ; and he is so sincere and delicate in all his kindness, that he makes me almost forget at times that I am not in my own house and he is my visitor, instead of I and my daughter being in his and his guests.'

' I am very glad too, the will has been

found, before I went away, as I know you were very uneasy about it ; knowing there was one somewhere,' remarked William.

'Yes, it is fortunate,' said Mrs. Wyndham with a slight shade of secret embarrassment, as she thought of the clause relating to her daughter in it. 'We can now go on with more confidence that we are doing what my poor husband wished we should.'

'Yes, and the general and yourself being the executors too, you are not under the necessity of consulting anyone else who might not have understood Mr. Wyndham's intentions so well as you and he do,' rejoined William.

At this moment Eliza Fleming entered the room to say that the builder had called to ask her mistress about something belonging to the new house, and wished to see her. Mrs. Wyndham accordingly left the room to speak to him, and was absent some time ; William was therefore left alone with Blanche.

For a few minutes there was a pause. The hearts of both were too much agitated for speech. Blanche was sitting on the sofa. William rose and sat down beside her. Her hand was lying upon her lap. He took it and pressed it silently and tenderly in his :

and there was no attempt on her part to withdraw it, but a calm deep look of inexpressible tenderness and affection told him how dear to her his presence was, and how very sad she would be when he was gone.

‘Well, Blanche, dear,’ said he in a soft subdued tone, ‘the time for my departure is very near at hand. I am sorry to leave you and shall be very sad, I’m afraid, when I am so far from you as I shall soon be. Are you sorry I am going?’

For a moment Blanche looked into his face with a quiet inquiring glance, as if she thought the question implied a doubt of her love ; but seeing there nothing but an expression of the deepest tenderness and devotion, the momentary anxiety of her heart was instantly allayed.

‘Yes, William, dear, I am very sorry. You don’t doubt that I am, do you?’ she replied tenderly.

‘No, Blanche, dearest ; I hardly knew what I was saying when I asked the question, and I have too much faith in your affection to think you will not be sorry when I am gone. But you must try not to grieve very much ; God knows how my heart yearns to remain, and be near you : but I feel that I

must go ! I should be equally unworthy of the name of a soldier, and of the happiness I aspire to with you, if I were, at a time like the present, to shrink from the performance of those duties I owe to my queen and country,' said Captain Haverty, with agitated earnestness, pressing still more tenderly the soft hand he held in his.

‘Oh, William !’ said Blanche, her large clear eyes filling with tears as she spoke, ‘I know you cannot stay now, or shrink from your duty. But I feel it very hard to part with you for so long a time ! And, too, your going to be exposed to so many dangers ! while I am so far, far from you ! Oh, I wish I could be near you ; I should not mind any dangers or any fatigue if I were beside you !’ she added looking up into his face with the deep earnest confidence of full trusting love.

‘God bless you ! dearest Blanche, for saying so,’ replied William, with passionate earnestness ; ‘you give me a happiness that will strengthen my heart and support me in all my dangers and long absence from you—though if anything could make me shrink from encountering an enemy, it would be the thought that you were exposed to them as

well as myself. But, thank goodness, dear, I shall have no fear of that, to weaken my arm when we meet our enemies.'

'Oh, William ! I hope you will not expose yourself unnecessarily to the rage of those dreadful Sepoys,' said Blanche entreatingly.

'For your sake, if not for my own, I will not : though there's little danger to be apprehended from such despicable cowards as I believe them to be. But do not be uneasy on that account. I will not expose myself to any unnecessary danger ; and I hope God will protect me and bring me safe home again, and also preserve and keep you till I come back to the happiness that waits me in your love and goodness.'

In a few minutes Mrs. Wyndham re-entered the room, and with her General Fielden.

'Well, William, my dear boy !' said the latter, in a cheerful, hearty tone as he shook hands with him, 'you are come to see us for the last time before you start ?'

'Yes, general, I'm afraid I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you again for some time to come !' replied William sadly.

'I am very sorry you are going to leave us. We shall all miss you, and look forward

to your return, if it please God to spare us and you for that, with much anxiety,' returned the general with feeling.

'I hope we shall all be spared to meet again. I shall often think of you and those I leave behind me, when I am far, far away : many thousands of miles from here.'

'We shall look forward anxiously for every mail to learn of your safety and progress too,' said Mrs. Wyndham. 'You are sure to write every mail either to your father and mother or to us.'

'Yes : only when I am up the country, the communication may be irregular in the present disturbed state of things. So you must not be uneasy if I am not heard of, or, if no letters come from me by some of the mails,' he replied.

'Well, we must hope for the best, when that is the case,' rejoined Mrs. Wyndham, 'however anxious we may be about your safety.'

Captain Haverty had promised to return to his father and mother in time to spend a portion of his last evening at home with them before they went to bed. He had, therefore in his own mind, restricted himself to about a couple of hours for this farewell visit to

his beloved Blanche. But fully three hours had passed before he could find resolution and self-denial enough to tear himself away, and his heart sank within him at the thought of taking a last, long leave of her whose presence seemed now as necessary to his happiness as his own existence. Still, part they must, and making a sudden effort to subdue the emotion he felt every moment growing stronger and stronger in his heart, he sprang to his feet, and seizing Blanche by the hand, pressed it for an instant, in impassioned silence, in his, and then in a half-choking voice said, while General Fielden, with the delicacy and tact of a gallant old soldier as he was, not only turned away himself, but drew Mrs. Wyndham to the other end of the room also, pointing out some object on the lawn in front of the house, that they might not appear to observe the leave-taking between the lovers—

‘Blanche! It’s a hard thing to part from you, and to go away so far, and for so long a time, too; but it must be done, dearest. Our long farewell must now be taken!’

‘Dearest William,’ replied Blanche looking up into his face with all the tender confidence of long-tried love, and struggling

to subdue her own deep, agitated emotion, that she might speak cheeringly to him, 'do not be so distressed ! God knows I would give the world if it were mine, that you did not go away again ! But I should not be worthy of that love which I know you have for me if I allowed my own feelings to interfere with you in the performance of your duties. My heart will be very sad and lonely till you return. But I must try to bear it,' she added, almost speechless with grief.

For a moment William Haverty looked as if these words indicated less affection on Blanche's part than he had expected, but it was only for a moment, for he quickly perceived the heroic self-denial she was exercising in endeavouring to conceal her own emotions from him.

' May God bless you, dearest Blanche ! ' he said in a deep earnest voice, almost inaudible from agitation, pressing his lips for a moment to hers as he spoke. ' Farewell ! Farewell !'

' Farewell ! ' she faintly replied, turning pale and sinking on the sofa as she spoke the dreadful word.

' Come Blanche dear,' said her mother in a half-chiding, affectionate tone coming forward. ' You must not give way and

distress William so at the time he is going away from all his friends.'

'Well, William, my dear boy, I suppose we must now say good-bye to you,' said the general, in a kindly earnest tone as he took his proffered hand and pressed it warmly. 'I hope God will be with you, and prosper you, and bring you safely home to us again.'

'Thank you. I hope He will. Good-bye!' he replied, returning the pressure of his hand, after which he exchanged an earnest farewell with Mrs. Wyndham; and then again grasping Blanche's hand for a moment in silence, he rushed out of the room unable to speak.

CHAPTER V.

AT an early hour next morning, they were all alive at Colonel Haverty's. There was much bustle among the servants, and flurried agitation in both the father and mother of our departing hero. Poor Mrs. Haverty struggled hard to conceal her emotions, but could not. Several times she threw her arms round the neck of her son and pressed him to her breast, while the big warm tears rolled down her cheeks and fell upon his bosom. Nor was the colonel less overcome. Every now and then he was obliged to rise from the breakfast table and walk about, or leave the room, to check or conceal the agitation which came upon him at the thought of his son's departure.

Meantime Patrick O'Brien was also preparing for his journey in the kitchen, where he was

laying in a good solid meal of cold meat, fried bacon and potatoes, bread-and-butter and coffee, to all of which he was liberally invited by the cook, and pressed to partake of, by Mary Parker the housemaid, whose cheeks seemed less blooming than usual this morning, and whose merry, roguish eyes were much less merry and roguish than they generally were. Whether the cause of this was a headache, as she persisted in saying it was, or something else, we will not pause to inquire. Perhaps she would not have been over well pleased with anyone who had exhibited too much curiosity upon a subject which strictly belonged to herself; and very concisely, a little later in the day, when, in his spiteful disappointment, because she would have nothing to say to him, the baker's man began to rally her upon looking rather pale, and hoped she would not fret overmuch for her Irish sweetheart, now that he was gone, she told him to mind his own business, if he had any, and leave her to mind hers, in a tone which effectually put a stop to all further attempts at condolence on his part.

‘Ay, it’s all very fine : but ye’ll be like all the rest o’ ye men when ye’re gone,’ said

Mary Parker, in reply to some gallant expressions of Patrick's, as he thanked her for an additional supply of the fried bacon and potatoes. 'Out o' sight, out o' mind. That's the way with all o' ye.'

'Och, now my darlint, sure an' ye don't mane to think that Patrick O'Brien's one o' they unmannerly spalpeens, that don't know how to trait a dear crater like yerself better than that,' replied the Irishman in a deprecatory tone.

'I dare say ye're no better than other people,' returned Mary in a half-teasing tone, glancing somewhat tenderly at him as she spoke.

'Sure an' I am though, if that's the way o' thim; an' the remembrance o' ye will kape me so, if I were away for twenty years. An' all the Kochinours and bagums o' they Saypoys —bad luck to thim, the murtherin' villians, for makin' my masther an' me go out to Indy to knock the ugly heads off their shoulders an' laive you behind me, my jewel!—will niver make Patrick O'Brien forgit ye,' rejoined the Irishman, with gay gallantry.

'Be off with ye, and don't talk such stuff,' said Mary Parker, with a coquettish toss of her saucy head, and an inward tremour, looking more pleased than she wished either the

cook or Patrick himself to suppose. ‘If ye and yer young master cared much about anybody at home, ye wouldn’t go out to be killed among they savage Sapoys, as ye call them,’ she added, with some agitation in her voice.

‘Och now! Be aisy about that same killin’, my darlint! Did ye iver know Patrick O’Brien kilt by anybody yit? or his masther either for that matter? Sure an’ ye didn’t?’ exclaimed Patrick, putting a large piece of fried potato and bacon into his mouth as he spoke.

‘No, of course not, ye stoopid; or how could ye have been here now?’ returned Mary, satirically.

‘Well, thin, if thim Rooshans couldn’t kill us, we’re not the bhoys to be killed by thim Saypoy niggers in Indy. So ye needn’t be unaisy about me at all, at all—nor my masther aither,’ replied Patrick, with good-humoured mock-gravity.

‘Uneasy about ye, indeed!’ rejoined Mary, with an affected sneer, though a smile dimpled her apple-like cheeks at the same time. ‘The conceit of some people! To think I should be uneasy about ye, indeed! Well, what next, I wonder? But if I’m not uneasy

about ye, perhaps there's somebody that'll be uneasy enough about young master when he's gone. Well, after what very near took'd place from his being away last time, *I* wouldn't have gone away again for anybody, if I'd a' been him, that's all,' said she, emphatically.

'Nor I neither,' added the cook, positively.

'Well, now,' said Patrick, with a sage look, 'I tell ye what, if that same young lady isn't to be trusted more than that, thin let her go, says I, an' bad luck to her! for the captain wid niver ha' the consint o' Patrick O'Brien to marry her.'

'Ay, but it wasn't her fault that she was going to marry that Mr. James Murray before,' returned Mary; 'so don't go to wish the dear young lady bad luck in that way. It was her father's doings, everybody knows that well enough.'

'Sure, but her father, rist his sowl, isn't comin' alive agin, as soon as we're gone, to make the young lady mar'y Misther Murray,' said Patrick. 'Besides, Eliza Fleming tould me the other day that it's all arranged; an' the captain's to marry the young lady as soon as he comes home from killin' the Saypoys; an' sure now; an' ye'll consint to do the same, my darlint,' he added, with a

half fond, half comic glance at the house-maid.

‘And take ye, ye mean, I suppose?’ said she, with a slightly composed look of feigned surprise.

‘Yes, sure an’ I do,’ replied Patrick.

‘Go along with ye, an’ don’t talk such nonsense. Ye know very well ye’re only a blarneying of me, as ye call it, and I shall never marry anybody—indeed I shan’t,’ returned Mary Parker, in a tone of something like disappointment.

‘Ye mane nobody but Patrick O’Brien, don’t ye, my jewel?’ said that gallant Hibernian; ‘an’ thin we shall be married the same day as his honour, the captain, an’ the young lady, an’ by the same praist too!’

‘Don’t be talking such stuff, I tell ye,’ returned the housemaid, with a saucy look and a blush. ‘Perhaps ye may never come back again, either o’ ye,’ she added, half sorrowfully.

‘Och, niver fear that! Patrick O’Brien will take better care o’ both his masther an’ himself than that same,’ cried he, gaily; ‘an’ as for that young lady, bless her heart, I’m not unaisy at all, at all, about her forgittin’ my masther when he’s gone.’

‘No, but somebody else may try to get hold o’ her for all that,’ replied Mary.

‘Mr. Murray, ye maine, I suppose?’

‘Yes; or anybody else.’

‘Thin, by dad, they had better laive that alone, an’ kape out o’ the way o’ Patrick O’Brien when he comes back from Indy, or by the powers he’ll be the death o’ every mother’s son o’ thim!’ he replied, almost fiercely.

‘What, ye don’t mean to say ye would kill them?’ cried the cook, half frightened already.

‘Och, sure an’ I would,’ said Patrick, with good-humoured indifference. ‘It’s myself that’s jist the bhoy to do that same compleately now!’

‘But that would be murder, and ye would be hanged for it,’ said Mary, with a slight shudder at the terrible thought.

‘Och, but Patrick O’Brien’s not the lad to murther thim entirely, the villians! though it would sarve thim right if he did. He would only circumvint thim, as he did Misther Murray the night we came here from the Crimea. Yes, circumvint thim, that’s the word. It’s much more respectable to do that thin to murther, an’ they can’t

hang me for that,' said Patrick, with his rather erroneous notions as to the exact meaning of the phrase.

‘Well, if ye wanted to circumvent them, ye should have stayed at home instead o’ going away to India to fight them savages,’ said Mary.

‘What, an’ laive my masther to go by himsilf?’ cried Patrick, with astonishment.

‘No, he should have stayed at home too, if he had wanted to prevent any one else from having the young lady,’ replied the housemaid.

‘What, an’ laive thim Saypoys to kill an’ murther our countrymen and women and little childers too, without taking vingance on thim for the same? No, by my soul that would niver do at all, at all!’ exclaimed Patrick.

‘Well, I hope ye and young master won’t let them take vengeance on ye, that’s all,’ said Mary, quietly.

‘Och, niver fear that. An’ if ye find either that Mr. Murray, or any other unmannerly spalpeen trying to get hould o’ the young lady, ye’ve only to let Patrick O’Brien know, an’ he’ll come back from Indy, the moment he has settled thim Saypoy villains, an’ give

the cowardly blaguards a taste o' the same medecin he has given the niggers there a dose ov.'

‘But how am I to know anything about it? And if I did, how am I to let ye know? Ye talk as if ye could come back from India as soon as ye could come from Westdon,’ said Mary.

‘Och, sure now, can’t I come in almost less than no time by that new invinted vayhicle called the tellagraff,’ replied Patrick, with a confident air.

‘Why, the telegraph doesn’t bring people, ye natural that ye are, not to know better nor that,’ returned Mary Parker, laughing at his ignorance. ‘It only brings messages.’

‘Och, but I shall make it bring myself with my own missage; sure an’ I will. Patrick O’Brien isn’t the lad to sind missages to have his work done when he can come an’ do it himself—not at all, at all. An’ if ye sind a letter to Misther O’Brien, care o’ his honour, Captain Haverty, Indy, it’s sure to find me; an’ ye had better sind yer letter by the tellagraff, too, an’ thin it will raich me in no time; an’ be sure you sail it well up, not to let thim spalpeens o’ clerks know what’s in it,’ said he, with a wise look.

During this conversation Patrick had been making a substantial breakfast, which showed, however faithful and generous he might be, he was little troubled with sentimentality. Having now finished, he arose up and left the kitchen, and began carrying out his master's baggage, and his own strong wooden box, and packing them upon the carriage which was to convey them to the railway station; after which he went back to the kitchen, and bade the cook good-bye, and then turned round to the housemaid, who had been assisting him downstairs with the various packages, and who somehow or other seemed to be always near him, and whose pale cheeks and glistening eyes betokened much more grief upon the occasion than she would have acknowledged to anyone, even to Patrick himself.

‘Good-bye, thin, my darlint,’ said he, holding out his hand, which she took without speaking, looking very much as if she could have cried, but would not. ‘Good-bye,’ he repeated, half-tenderly, while she turned her misty eyes to his face with an expression of feeling which had the effect of making him stoop hastily down and snatch a hearty kiss from her lips, which she neither screamed

at nor made any pretence to struggle against.

‘Good-bye,’ she at length replied, in a rather broken voice, smoothing her hair with her hand. ‘Ye'll come back with young master again, won't ye?’ she added, with sorrowful entreaty.

‘Och, sure an’ I will. Arn’t I comin’ back to make ye Mrs. O’Brien?’

‘Well, don’t ye forget then,’ replied Mary, blushing through her anxiety, and tripping back at the sound of footsteps coming from the breakfast-room, running upstairs to watch him from one of the bedroom windows.

‘By this time Captain Haverty had also finished his breakfast, and everything was now ready for his departure. He had already bid his father and mother good-bye in the breakfast-room. But they both came with him to the door.

‘Well, once more, father, good-bye,’ said he, turning into the hall and taking his father’s solitary hand in both his and pressing it affectionately.

‘Good-bye, William dear; and may God Almighty bless, protect, and prosper you, my

son,' replied the colonel, in a loud, fervid agitated voice, firmly clasping his son's hand, and his eyes glistening as he spoke.

'Good-bye again, dear mother; I hope you and my father will both enjoy good health till I come back,' said William, giving his mother a last affectionate embrace.

'Good-bye, my dear son; and may He who has hitherto watched over and protected you, still do so, and permit you to return home again in safety,' said his mother, pale with agitation.

William was too much overcome himself at leaving his parents to be able to offer any consolation to them, and, as soon as he had released himself from the clinging embrace of his fond mother and again warmly pressed his father's hand, he jumped into the carriage and was driven off.

With Patrick O'Brien seated upon the box beside the driver, away rattled the carriage in the direction of Westdon, where it arrived just in time to catch the train, and, in a few minutes after that, William was being hurled rapidly along, with a sad heart, at leaving his beloved parents, and not less beloved Blanche; every moment carrying

him further and further away from scenes and attachments which, in all probability, he might not look upon again, or exchange sympathy with for years, if ever.

CHAPTER VI.

SEVERAL months necessarily elapsed before any intelligence of Captain Haverty's safe arrival in India reached Bilford. At length a letter came to his father informing him of that fact, and that he had already started, in excellent health, up the country to meet the mutineers. The same mail brought a letter to Blanche Wyndham, full of the most tender expressions of devoted love and attachment, and hopeful anticipations of happiness when his duties permitted him to return, which he trusted might not be so far off as they had thought at first.

Hopeful and happy with the letter, Blanche soon recovered her usual cheerfulness and spirits, which had been much less buoyant since William Haverty's departure for India. She had no doubt of his love ; but their wide

separation, and her anxiety to hear from him, had hung like a damp cloud upon her heart for several weeks back, every day growing heavier and darker, filling her mind with all manner of uneasiness and alarm. Now, however, the sun had shone through that cloud, and dispersed all her fears for his immediate safety ; and the longing affection of her own gentle heart feasted in sympathy and joy upon the deep ardent devotion breathing in every sentence of that letter. She felt her own love strengthened, as well as comforted, by the glowing tenderness of her lover, and in the modesty of her nature prayed that she might prove herself worthy of such affection, and be permitted to share her life with one so true, noble and devoted as her beloved William Haverty.

As soon as she had read the letter and communicated the intelligence of Captain Haverty's safety to her mother and General Fielden, Blanche Wyndham went off to inform Colonel and Mrs. Haverty of it also.

The day was fine and sunny. The autumn tint was deep upon the hedges and trees. The thick brambles were bent down by their large clusters of blackberries ; and the orchards, on each side of the road, were laden and bright

with golden and red-cheeked apples, all but ready for the hand of the husbandman to gather them : while over all the larks were carolling high up in the clear blue sky : the robins and wrens were hopping about and warbling their sweet little notes in the bushes, the starlings in flocks, or sitting chattering in crowds upon the leafy elms ; and the thrush and the blackbird were heard singing in the thickets and hedges, as if they too rejoiced that she was happy. For she was happy that morning—very happy. The deep tone that pervaded every line of that letter had filled her with a joy such as they alone can understand who have received a long-looked-for letter of love from some one far, far away, dearer to them than aught on earth beside.

The road she took did not lead her past Bilford Hall, the way she generally went to the house of the Havertys—and she often went there now—but was a narrow lane which went along the higher ground, considerably shortening the distance, and joined the main road not far from Colonel Haverty's house. It was the same road that William Haverty had usually taken in his walks between his father's and General Fielden's ; and very

dear was it to her for having been the scene of many a ramble in her childish days with him who was now far away amid the hot burning sands of India, but whose heart she knew was still with her, as hers was with him : whose tender tones still rang in her ears, and whose looks of love still shone into her heart and filled her with the purest happiness.

In full sympathy with all the gladness and beauty around her, Blanche Wyndham walked briskly along between the thick high hedges on either side of the lane, till a sharp turn in the road brought her suddenly and unexpectedly face to face with a gentleman on horseback, who immediately drew up in front of her ; while the path was too narrow to allow her to pass the horse without doing so by pushing close into the side of the hedge. The rider was Mr. James Murray.

She had not seen or spoken to Mr. Murray since the death of her father ; and at that moment he was certainly about the last person she was either thinking of, or could have desired to meet. Still she endeavoured to appear neither surprised at the rencontre, nor disconcerted by his presence ; but trying to conceal her internal agitation, quietly

stepped a little aside to allow him to pass her. He at the same time, causing his grey cob to turn partially across the road, thereby the more effectually preventing her from getting past, with an air of gallantry and surprise lifted his hat, and said in a tone of familiarity, as if he quite ignored the idea that she could possibly regard herself as free from the engagement which her father had wished her to carry out with him, and which had to her mind, been completely broken off eight or nine months ago, but which Mr. James Murray did not wish to appear to recognise, beyond that a slight interruption had taken place in their intercourse by the unforeseen circumstances and events which had only retarded for a time the completion of their engagement. All this Blanche Wyndham read in a single shrinking glance at the large face of the big, heavy man, as he sat before her on his stout grey cob, and said in his usual hard, coarse, pompous voice, though perhaps with more animation in it than it generally had, and a kind of heavy smile :

‘ Ah ! my dear Miss Wyndham ! how do you do ? This is indeed an unexpected pleasure ! and I am so glad to have met you,

and to see you looking so well. I hope your worthy mother is well ?

‘Thank you—my mother is quite well,’ said Blanche in a low trembling voice, struggling to look and speak composedly.

‘I’m delighted to hear it : for, although while she and you remain under the protection of General Fielden, I have some unwillingness to intrude upon you, I always inquire how you both are.’

‘You are very kind. But I do not exactly know what you mean by our being under the protection of General Fielden. My mamma and I are visitors with that gentleman, who is also my guardian, and trustee for my papa’s estate. But if you mean to say we are treated otherwise than as friends and welcome visitors by General Fielden, you take a most unwarrantable liberty with both him and us,’ said Blanche, with a slight flush in her cheeks.

‘I beg your pardon, my dear Blanche,’ he replied, determined to assume a familiarity of tone which should convince her that he still regarded the engagement between them as unbroken, while she shrunk back, trembling with fear and indignation at hearing it. ‘I did not mean to imply anything disrespectful

either to the worthy General Fielden or to your good mother, and, of course, still less to yourself. I merely meant to say that, while you remain with him, I feel somewhat reluctant about calling, and paying you that attention which you might expect and are entitled to from me under the circumstances, as the worthy general and I have not been upon such cordial terms with each other of late as we used *to be*,' said James Murray, apologetically.

'I assure you, I neither expect nor wish any attention from you now, Mr. Murray,' Blanche replied, with composed firmness.

'Well, it's very kind of you to be so considerate with me, while circumstances, and not my own will, prevent me from keeping up our old intercourse,' rejoined Mr. Murray. 'But I see your house is getting fast on, and I hope you will soon get into it; and then, of course, I shall have full opportunity of paying you that respect and attention which is due to you from me.'

'Indeed, I do not know what you mean, Mr. Murray,' said Blanche, with a chilled, trembling heart. 'I have told you that I neither look for nor desire any attention from you, nor do I know that I am entitled to

any; and neither my mamma nor myself have any wish to renew an acquaintance from which we have already derived so little pleasure and so much discomfort.' As she said this, Blanche looked as if she would have tried to push past Mr. Murray's horse, but, from the way it was standing across the lane, it was impossible to do so.

'Indeed, Miss Wyndham,' said he, paying no attention to her desire to pass, speaking in a half-reprehensive tone, and with the air of one who considered himself fully entitled to some degree of authority over her, 'I am sorry to hear you say so, considering the position we are in toward each other. But probably some one else has been trying to dissuade you from fulfilling your father's wishes — and your own engagement,' he added; 'or perhaps you feel disappointed that I have not paid you enough attention lately, though the cause of that I have just explained to you.'

'No one has been trying to dissuade me from fulfilling either my father's wishes or what you are pleased to call my engagement: for, whatever the former may have been at one time, before his death you know as well as I do that nothing was further from his

desire than that I should fulfil that engagement—so contrary to my feelings—with you, and which was then entirely broken off.'

Trembling at heart, and agitated though she was, Blanche Wyndham spoke with an energy and decision of tone which might have convinced anyone of the utter hopelessness of attempting to alter her sentiments and determination. But it did not suit Mr. Murray's purpose to be so convinced.

'I am very sorry if you thought that the unfortunate accident of your good father's death was an event that would have justified me in breaking off that engagement,' said he, with perfect composure. 'I could never be so unjust to you, as well as your father's memory, as that. And I hope you will not for a moment suppose that I ever considered it to do more than to postpone for a time the fulfilment of the arrangement made with your father just before his decease, and which, I believe, he left sufficient evidence of in his will to convince anyone what his wishes were at the time of his death.'

'I do not know what you mean,' said Blanche, turning pale in spite of herself. 'I have not seen my father's will, and I do not

believe he has expressed any wish in it upon the subject you allude to.'

'I have heard the contrary,' said Mr. Murray, drily.

'And how should you know what is in my father's will?' inquired Blanche, who, though she had heard how it had been recovered, was ignorant of General Fielden's suspicions that Mr. Murray had been shown it by Bilson.

'Oh, I—' said James Murray, checking himself—'Why, you know anyone may see a will after it has been proved; and people do sometimes have the curiosity to read the wills of others. I can't say that I have been at the trouble of going to the place where they are kept to do so, but I have heard from one who has seen the will that there is something to that effect expressed in it.'

These words fell upon the heart of Blanche Wyndham like an untimely frost upon an early flower. She felt both chilled and stunned by them, and for a few moments was unable to offer any reply.

With much secret satisfaction, Mr. James Murray saw the effect he had made, and, without committing himself too far as to his knowledge of the contents of the will, was

resolved, if possible, to improve upon it, and after a short pause continued :

‘Of course I do not tell you this because I think that either the feelings with which you at one time regarded me have changed, or that you needed to be reminded of your father’s wishes to perform your own duty toward either him or myself. I merely mention what I believe was his last wish, to let you see that I have neither forgotten our engagement, nor am indifferent to your feelings, although circumstances have lately prevented us from being so much in each other’s society as we could have wished.’

The cool matter-of-course tone in which the last sentence was uttered by Mr. Murray, had the effect of somewhat rousing Blanche from the sort of mental stupor which had for a moment fallen upon her. She started, as if stung by a wasp, and indignantly, though tremulously, exclaimed :

‘Sir, you know perfectly well that I never liked either you or your society ; and that I never made any engagement with you, but in obedience to my poor father, who, only a few hours before his death, of his own accord, not only fully freed me from it, but told you, yourself, that he no longer wished it.’

‘But, my dear Miss Wyndham, surely you do not suppose that I was going to be so ungenerous to either you or your worthy father as to think much of what he said at a time when his physical sufferings were so great that he could hardly be expected to be quite capable of judging correctly of what was best for those around him. It not unfrequently happens, you know, that, when the mind is at all affected, as no doubt your poor father's was at the time of his death, we show the greatest aversion to those very things and persons which, in our usual health and mental perspicuity, are dearest to us, or most in accordance with our own objects and desires ; and this, I consider, was the condition of your father.’

‘Sir, you have no right to consider anything of the kind. My father's reason was as sound and clear up to the very hour of his death as it ever was in his life ; and both mamma and General Fielden will testify the same. And I know he did not wish me to fulfil that engagement, as you call it, which had been entirely forced upon me, so contrary to both my own feelings and wishes.’

‘Well, I am sorry to hear you say that

now, Miss Wyndham, after the way you have kept me in suspense so long, and after having engaged yourself to me, and now telling me it was only in obedience to the wishes of your father, who changed his mind, too, before he died,' said Mr. Murray, in a tone of half-reproof and feigned disappointment. 'I did not think you were capable of such conduct to anyone, much less to me. But I hope you will think better of it; I feel sure that the estrangement of your regard is only temporary, and that your feelings will not only soon return to their usual channel, but that you will be more just to both your own character and the memory of your father than your present tone might lead one to infer.'

'I am neither unjust to my own character nor to the memory of my papa in saying what I do,' replied Blanche, warmly. 'You know quite well I never wished to have anything to say to you whatever; and though my papa once gave you encouragement in your most unwelcome attentions to me, he completely changed his mind before his death, and told you so.'

'I am sorry you should think what he said then of so much importance; but I feel sure,

when you have convinced yourself that what I have told you I understand to be expressed in his will is correct, and when you have calmly considered the matter over in your own mind, you will be more inclined to return to your old attachment and to act more justly toward me than you appear at present disposed to do,' said Mr. James Murray, in a feigned tone of hopeful resignation.

'There is nothing, sir, will ever make me have any wish to renew my intercourse with you,' said Blanche, in an agitated, angry tone; 'so let me pass, if you please,' she added, preparing to push past the horse.

'You won't allow me to escort you where you're going ?'

'No; and if you don't turn your horse aside, I shall call to the people working in that orchard down there, and let them know you won't let me go; and tell them how you are trying to annoy me,' replied Blanche, indignantly.

The threat of calling to the people in the orchard had the effect of making her persecutor pull his horse hastily aside, while, before he could again speak, she rushed past and never stopped till she was out of sight

in the lane, leaving that worthy gentleman looking after her with mingled feelings of rage, disappointment, and a determination to secure her, either by fair means or foul, for the sake of her large fortune.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Blanche Wyndham arrived at Colonel Haverty's house, she was so out of breath with running and overcome with fear and agitation, that the moment she was shown into the room where Mrs. Haverty was sitting, she threw herself into an easy-chair and fainted.

Surprised and alarmed, Mrs. Haverty arose from her seat and went to her assistance, and calling Mary Packer, who had seen Blanche's agitation as she showed her in and had lingered rather longer at the room-door on closing it, sent her upstairs for smelling-salts, sal volatile, vinegar and spring water, all of which were immediately brought by that startled but nimble-footed handmaid. In a few minutes Blanche began to recover. A slight shudder ran through her, and, as if

in a dream, she muttered in a tone of the most painful earnestness :

‘Oh, don’t say I’m to marry James Murray ! Papa didn’t wish it at last, I know he didn’t ! It is all untrue ; he did not say in his will I was to marry him ! Oh, don’t let him come near me !’

‘No, indeed he shall not, dear !’ said Mrs. Haverty, in a tone of surprise, with the deepest tenderness. ‘Look up, my dear Blanche. You are quite safe with me. Don’t you know me ?’

‘Oh, dear Mrs. Haverty !’ replied Blanche, slowly opening her eyes, and giving a hasty, half-fearful glance around her, as if to assure herself where she was. ‘I’ve been so frightened by Mr. James Murray !’

‘He has not dared to insult you, has he ?’ said Mrs. Haverty, indignantly.

‘No, but he has annoyed me very much. I met him in the lane on his horse, and I could not get past him for a long time ; and he says that papa stated in his will that I was to marry him !’ replied the pale and agitated girl.

‘I don’t believe it, my dear. My husband would have known if he had ; and he would have told me if he had known it,’ rejoined

Mrs. Haverty, astonished, but confidently. ‘And how does Mr. Murray know what is in your papa’s will, I should like to know?’ she inquired, after a moment’s pause. ‘What business had he to know anything about it?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Blanche, in a sad tone; ‘but I hope it is not true.’

‘My dear Blanche, how do you do? Good God! what is the matter, my child?’ exclaimed Colonel Haverty, at that moment entering the room, starting with surprise and alarm at seeing her pale face and painful expression of countenance; while Mary Packer, seeing that she was no longer required, left the room at the same time.

‘Oh, Colonel Haverty! tell me, did papa say in his will that I was to—to marry Mr. James Murray?’ cried Blanche, with an effort, starting up, and looking into the colonel’s face with an earnestness of expression which was painful to witness, and clinging to his one arm for support.

‘As far as I know, and to the best of my belief,’ said the colonel, with something like confusion mingling with his surprise—‘he did not. General Fielden consulted me upon the subject of—of the will, when it was found, and there is no such wish expressed

in it—as far as I can form an opinion of its contents.'

A more gallant old soldier than Colonel Haverty never wore the uniform of the British army ; but he was the veriest child at deception. Both his wife and Blanche Wyndham saw in a moment, by his unusually hesitating and cautious manner of speaking, that there was something in the will upon the subject which he had not only kept a secret from his wife, but was reluctant to communicate to Blanche.

' Oh, it is true then ! ' shrieked Blanche, almost sinking upon the floor in her agony of mind. ' It is true ! and no one has ever told me ! And I have been so happy thinking of *him*, and I came to show you *his* letter,' she cried, letting the letter she had received from William drop from her hand upon the floor. ' And I have been deceiving *him*, too ! Oh, it is hard to have misled me so cruelly ! ' she added, in a tone of utter desolation and sadness.

' Oh, colonel dear, is it really so ? ' asked poor old Mrs. Haverty, almost as much surprised and distressed as Blanche was.

' No, my dear, it is not ; God forbid ! ' exclaimed he, much agitated.

‘ Oh, Colonel Haverty !’ said Blanche, in an imploring tone, struggling with emotion, ‘ do not deceive me ! Is there anything in the will at all about *that* ?’

‘ There is nothing in the will really implying a wish that you should marry Mr. James Murray, my dear child,’ replied the colonel with fatherly tenderness, though still shrinking from a direct answer.

‘ Oh, there is something then ! I know it : and you won’t tell me !’ said Blanche, in an earnest, desponding tone.

‘ Yes, there is something ; but it does not say that you are to marry Mr. Murray. It is only that when you do marry him, he is to have ten thousand pounds, and also the rest of the property, after the death of your dear mother,’ said the colonel, with the look of a witness compelled to give evidence upon a question to which he would much rather have declined.

‘ And that’s why he wants you to marry him,’ put in Mrs. Haverty.

‘ I’ve no doubt of it, my dear. But who has told you of it now ?’ inquired the colonel with a puzzled look, addressing Blanche.

‘ Why, Murray himself,’ said Mrs. Haverty ; ‘ he met her in the lane, as she was coming

here, and would not allow her to pass till he had told her. And when she came in, she was so overcome that she fainted from fright and agitation.'

'He did! May the Lord visit him for his wickedness!' exclaimed the colonel with energetic earnestness, throwing up his left hand as he spoke. 'Old and maimed as I am, by the Lord! had I seen him, I would have run my sword through him!' said he, pointing to his sheathed sword, hanging over the mantle-shelf, with a flashing eye and fierce scowl upon his lofty forehead and thick grey eye-brows, which showed that he was still capable of being roused into action as well as anger, when insult or injustice either to himself or others provoked him to it.

'No, no, Colonel Haverty,' said Blanche, with gentle though sad entreaty, 'do not be so distressed for me. It was very foolish of me to—to give way to my feelings so,' she added with repressed agitation, and a sudden expression of secret determination in her look; at the same time placing the letter,—which the colonel had picked up from the carpet, and put in her hand—into her bosom, both the colonel and his wife glancing at

her with something like surprise as she did so.

For a few moments there was a pause. At length Blanche arose from her chair, as if to go.

‘You are not going yet, my dear,’ said Mrs. Haverty affectionately. ‘You must stay till you have recovered a little.’

‘I am quite well now, thank you.’

‘Let me walk back with you then, in case of—in case you should feel faint,’ said the colonel, rising and preparing to accompany her.

‘Oh no, thank you : I shall not feel faint again I dare say. It was only because I was a little startled,’ said she, with a mastery over her feelings, very unusual with her, though still with her accustomed gentleness.

‘But are not you afraid, dear, to go back by yourself, after having met that man, in case he should meet you and annoy you again ?’ asked Mrs. Haverty, with a glance at her husband.

‘Come now, my dear ; you’ll allow me the honour and pleasure of walking back with you,’ said the colonel with his usual gallant good-humour, though not without some internal uneasiness on account of the sudden

change in the manner of Blanche. 'You needn't be afraid,' he added, smiling, 'that I shall be guilty of a breach of the peace while you are with me, even should I meet Mr. Murray.'

'Oh, I'm not afraid of that,' replied Blanche, with a slightly forced smile, 'only I cannot think of allowing you to go back with me. I am quite well now: and have no fear of meeting any interruption this time. Good-bye,' she added, holding out her hand, which, seeing it was useless to urge her any further, the colonel took hold of, and shook warmly as he rejoined:

'Good-bye, my dear; and may God Almighty be with you and bless you,' with a solemnity of tone and look which were deeply impressive.

'Good-bye, dear Mrs. Haverty,' said Blanche, as the kind old lady took her small, tremulous hand, exchanging the accustomed parting kiss as she spoke.

'Good-bye, my dear child. Give my love to your mamma.'

'And my most sincere good wishes and kind regards, and also to my very worthy and dear old friend and fellow-campaigner, General Fielden. I hope your esteemed mother is

well,' said the colonel, in his usual tone of hearty politeness and sincerity.

‘Yes, thank you ; she is quite well.’

‘And the gallant general?’

‘Yes, he is quite well also. They both sent their very kind regards, and all sorts of messages to you and Mrs. Haverty ; but this —this—I have been so taken by surprise, that I had almost forgotten to deliver them,’ returned Blanche, making a strong effort to subdue or conceal her feelings.

‘You took out a letter and were going to show it to us, I think. What was it, dear ? We have had one ourselves this morning from In——’ said Mrs. Haverty with gentle sympathy, fancying she saw indications of returning cheerfulness in Blanche’s look. But, the instant the letter was mentioned, she started as if stung, and stopped Mrs. Haverty in the middle of the sentence.

‘Oh !’ she exclaimed, trembling with sudden agitation, but with a determination in her look to conceal it ; ‘yes, I did intend showing it to you, but it’s—it’s of no consequence now.’

There was a sad painful emphasis upon the last word which still more increased the affectionate anxiety of both Mrs. Haverty

and her husband. But they saw she did not wish to say anything more upon the subject, and therefore refrained from pressing her. They knew well enough from whom the letter was, and felt all the more for the disappointment of their beloved son, when he came to hear of this fresh impediment to his long-looked-for happiness, as well as for the sudden distress of Blanche ; who now took her departure, and hastened back to her mother, quite regardless of all the glad sounds and fair objects around her in her way, feeling as if her heart within her had been turned into lead or stone by the unexpected disclosure that had just been made to her respecting her father's will.

CHAPTER VIII.

INSTEAD of her walk lessening her agitation, it only increased it; and by the time she reached General Fielden's house, Blanche Wyndham was in a state of mental excitement almost approaching to madness. Without seeing or wishing to see anyone, she rushed upstairs to her own room, where, giving vent to her pent-up agony of emotion in a loud piercing shriek, she staggered across the floor, and fell forward upon her bed in a fainting-fit.

Fortunately Eliza Fleming was in a room near, and heard the scream of her young mistress, and instantly ran to her assistance. Fearful of alarming Mrs. Wyndham, Eliza, after slightly loosening Blanche's dress, and turning her face upward to prevent her being suffocated, rushed downstairs and brought

up the housekeeper, who was a sensible matronly person, and with her assistance tried to restore poor Blanche to consciousness.

But all their efforts were unavailing. They soon succeeded in bringing her back to a certain kind of half-insensible animation, but the deadening stupor of her mind they could not dispel. By the advice of the housekeeper, Mrs. Wyndham was immediately sent for, whose surprise and agony at seeing the state of her daughter, forming such a terrible contrast to her happiness only an hour or two before, was beyond description.

‘Good God ! what is this ?’ she exclaimed as she entered the room. ‘Oh, my child ! my child ! what is the matter ? How did this happen, Eliza ?’ she inquired, turning to her attendant.

‘I don’t know at all, ma’am,’ replied Eliza, almost as much distressed as her mistress. ‘As I was in my own room a few minutes since, I heard somebody come upstairs very fast, but didn’t think it was Miss Blanche ; and then a moment afterwards, I heard her give such a dreadful shriek as went through me like a knife, on which I ran in here and

found her lying on her bed ; and after turning her face up, I ran downstairs and brought up the housekeeper to help me to bring Miss Blanche to again ; but finding her so long in getting better, we got uneasy and sent for you, ma'am.'

'O God !' exclaimed the mother, with agonised earnestness, 'deal not so hard with me ! Run downstairs and send for a doctor !' she said, turning to the housekeeper, who was standing beside the bed with a look of respectful sympathy and anxiety.

'Yes, ma'am ; the coachman is downstairs, and he shall go off on horseback immediately,' replied the housekeeper, leaving the room as she spoke.

It was several days before Blanche Wyndham's consciousness returned to her ; and but for the greatest care and attention, she would have died from exhaustion. At first, her mother was utterly at a loss to account for the cause of her daughter's sudden illness. Even without the doctor's telling her, she at once saw that some terrible shock to her feelings had caused it ; but could not imagine in what way it had occurred. She knew her daughter had gone out to call on Colonel Haverty, to let him and his wife know of

her good news from their son ; and at first she feared that Blanche might have heard something there that had been the cause of it—perhaps the illness or death of their son. But the colonel and Mrs. Haverty happening to call the afternoon of the same day her daughter had called upon them—which they did, because they were alarmed on account of Blanche—the mystery was soon explained.

‘Now, Colonel Haverty,’ said General Fielden, with set teeth, as he heard the account of Mr. James Murray’s conduct to Blanche, as she had related it to Mrs. Haverty, ‘by the God that made me ! if I saw Murray before me at this moment I would shoot him as I would a dog or an assassin !’

‘May God forgive me, but I had the same desire when I first heard of it,’ returned the colonel. ‘Oh ! the infernal villainy of that man !’ he added with a fierce scowl.

‘Can we have a stronger proof of his utter unworthiness of being the husband of your daughter ?’ said the general, appealing to Mrs. Wyndham. ‘Even if your husband had not shown us how obnoxious Murray was to him before his death, I should have

deemed it my duty, after this, as the executor of his will, and the trustee of his property, and your daughter's guardian, to have done all in my power to prevent her from marrying a man who has no more appreciation of her virtues and amiable qualities, or love for herself than he would have for a cow or a sheep by which he expected to realise so much money. Even had there been a positive wish expressed in the will, I should not have scrupled now to do all I could to oppose its fulfilment. Her property, and that alone, is all that the fellow cares about.'

'I am too much afraid it is,' said Mrs. Wyndham sadly; immediately adding with angry bitterness, 'but while I can prevent it, he shall neither have my daughter nor one shilling of her property.'

'No; and fortunately, from what passed immediately before poor Mr. Wyndham's death, we have no fear but that we are carrying out his last wishes, as well as doing our best to prevent the sacrifice of your daughter's happiness, in following the course we have determined upon,' returned the general. 'I'd sooner my right hand were cut off—ay! and my left too, for that matter!—than that so good and gentle a girl became the wife of

such a coarse, vulgar, pompous blockhead, and heartless, wretched knave as he is.'

'I hope you won't be called upon to make such a sacrifice, general,' said Mrs. Wyndham, with a grave smile, 'as I am as firmly convinced as you are, of not only the propriety of preventing such an unfortunate union of my daughter and that bad man, but that we are acting in perfect accordance with my poor husband's wishes in doing so, and am determined that nothing shall ever induce me to alter the resolution I have come to on the subject.'

'Didn't I tell you that I felt sure the fellow had seen the will, and knew of its detention by that rascally tool of his, Bilson?' said the general, addressing Colonel Haverty.

'Of course, there can be no doubt about that now. Disreputable fellow, to have anything to do with such a bad character as I've heard that man is!'

'Humph! and I've heard from very good authority that there's some one else belonging to that man that he has to do with also,' returned the general in a low mysterious tone to the colonel, although not quite inaudible to Mrs. Wyndham.

‘Yes, so I believe,’ said the colonel, with a quiet look of secret disgust and contempt. ‘A pretty fellow he is, indeed, to aspire to the hand of a beautiful, pure and amiable young lady !’

‘Isn’t he ? but we will take care he doesn’t succeed in his dishonourable aspirations, colonel,’ rejoined General Fielden, decidedly. And then, changing the subject, remarked in a tone of friendly interest. ‘You have heard from William, I hope by this mail ? How is he ? I hear Sir Colin is on his march up the country toward Delhi.’

‘Yes, I had a letter from my son this morning. He writes in good health and capital spirits : and is full of hope at the propect of a brilliant campaign.’

‘I am delighted to hear it. Poor Blanche had a letter from him this morning,’ said the general, quietly.

‘I hope that had nothing to do with this sudden illness of hers,’ replied Colonel Haverty, uneasily.

‘Oh no ; she was all joy and hopeful happiness after reading it,’ said Mrs. Wyndham ; ‘and hastened off, I believe, to tell you and your wife of her good news.’

‘Oh, there was a letter in her hand, which

I thought she had intended either reading to us, or showing us ; but appeared as if she could not. We thought it was from William,' replied Mrs. Haverty.

'Poor William ! I am glad he is not here to know of this new distress,' said Mrs. Wyndham, sympathetically. 'He did not know, I suppose, of the clause in my poor husband's will that has caused all this trouble and unhappiness.'

'No, we thought it better not to tell him of it, especially as he was just going off,' replied the colonel, 'in case it made him more uneasy than the clause itself, even without subsequent reason for disregarding it, was entitled to do.'

Mrs. Wyndham, who had for a few minutes left her daughter to the care of Eliza Fleming, now returned to her, quickly followed by Mrs. Haverty.

CHAPTER IX.

ALTHOUGH Colonel Haverty, in writing to his son, carefully avoided any allusion to the cause of Blanche Wyndham's illness, and merely said that she was rather unwell, probably, he thought, from having over-fatigued herself a day or two before, but that no danger was apprehended ; another correspondent was less judicious in her information—not to Captain Haverty himself, but to his servant, Patrick O'Brien.

We have already said that when Blanche Wyndham came to Mrs. Haverty's after the interview with James Murray and gave utterance to what he had told her respecting her father's will, Mary Packer was present, assisting her mistress to recover her from her swoon, and knowing that Mr. Wyndham had, before his death, been accused

of trying to force his daughter, against her will, into a marriage with that gentleman, she believed it must be really the case.

Now Mary Packer had three very strong motives for communicating this intelligence to Patrick O'Brien. First, it will be remembered, he had charged her to let him know if either Mr. Murray or anyone else ventured to make any advances to Miss Wyndham. Secondly, she had very great dislike herself to Mr. James Murray, who had several times tried to insinuate himself into her company, and otherwise annoyed her when he had met her on the road between her master's house and Westdon ; and, therefore, was by no means willing that he should gain any advantage during the absence of her young master, who she well knew had long been deeply attached to Miss Wyndham, and who, she considered, was the only one that had any claim upon the affections of that young lady. Thirdly—and certainly this was not the least powerful incentive of the three—she was not without some clinging, tender feelings of her own for the good-humoured, gay-hearted Irishman, that longed to seek communion and intercourse with the object of her regard, and

which were just as strong in her as if she had been a fine lady instead of a housemaid, and Patrick O'Brien had been a real hero with half a dozen euphonious names and titles instead of being merely the faithful follower and servant of Captain William Haverty.

Impelled by this trinity of motives into a unity of purpose, Mary Packer therefore resolved to fulfil Patrick O'Brien's wish, and her own at the same time, by making this fresh attempt of Mr. Murray to gain Miss Wyndham, and the unexpected disclosures she had heard respecting the will of that young lady's father, an excuse for opening a correspondence with him which would keep him in remembrance of herself, as well as, she hoped, serve her young master and Miss Wyndham, and counteract the schemes of the detested Mr. James Murray, without appearing as if she had any strong motives of her own for doing so—the artful creature that she was, just as if she had any right to employ the little artifices and finesse that genteel young ladies and good, kind 'mamas sometimes make use of to attain their objects in the matrimonial line! Of course, it is very shocking that a girl in her position should dare to do anything of the kind! But, albeit

a certain kind of liking for Mary Packer, as a cheerful, good-natured, good-looking, saucy little piece of womankind, we feel still bound, as a faithful historian, to relate the above reprehensible behaviour on her part, leaving her pardon or condemnation to the judgment or pity of our more judicial readers.

Taking advantage of the opportunity afforded her by the absence of her master and mistress, when they went out in the afternoon to call upon Blanche Wyndham and her mother, and when she had nothing else in particular to do, Mary Packer sat down, and, after several attempts, succeeded in concocting a letter to Patrick O'Brien, in which, like a great many other persons when they get a pen in their hand and a sheet of paper before them, she was fully as anxious to create a strong impression on the mind of her reader, as to relate the plain simple truth, without either the embellishments of imagination or the distortion of facts.

What she said relative to herself we will not venture to pry into. Poor Mary Packer! It would be a great shame to insinuate ourselves into her confidence, as we have done, and then betray her little secrets and expose her weakness by telling what she said in her

first love-letter to the gallant Patrick O'Brien. We will merely mention what she said upon the subject of Blanche Wyndham. With various and sundry additions and exaggerations of her own, all arising out of simple regard and sympathy for the young lady and her own young master, she gave Patrick a full account of the scene she had witnessed that morning after Blanche Wyndham's unexpected meeting with Mr. James Murray, and the disclosures connected with Mr. Wyndham's will, which had created such a terribly painful impression on the mind of the poor young lady, enlarging, at the same time, on the badness and dangerous character of Mr. Murray, who she represented as being capable of any enormity of wickedness in the prosecution of his ends, and for the attainment of his objects. We do not, of course, profess to give her exact words, but rather aim at conveying to our readers the impressions she, in her own language, endeavoured to convey to Patrick O'Brien in her letter.

After she had written the letter another difficulty arose before her, which she had not till then contemplated. How was it to be addressed? This was a thought that puzzled her at first. But Mary Packer was not one

to be easily daunted after having once made up her mind to anything. She first thought of consulting her master on the subject, who, she doubted not, would be able to give her the proper advice. But then she was partly ashamed to let him know she wished to send a letter to Patrick, and partly unwilling, too, that he should know of it, in case he should suspect anything of what she had said about Blanche Wyndham and the conduct of James Murray. She therefore resolved not to do this, and, after some hesitation, at length decided upon directing the letter to 'Patrick O'Brien, with Captain Haverty, Ninety-third Regiment, India ;' which she accordingly did. She knew that India was a large place—perhaps larger than the whole of Westdonshire—but she thought the people were sure to know Captain Haverty and the Ninety-third Regiment, if even they did not know Patrick O'Brien, who would therefore be safe to receive the letter, which he actually, after some time, did.

Several months, however, took place before the letter came to Patrick's hands. The vagueness of the address, and the unsettled state of the country having quite disarranged the usual postal communications, combined

with the regiment being continually in motion, caused it to be considerably longer than, under usual circumstances, a letter to any part of India is in reaching its destination. During the time the letter was on its journey Captain Haverty had shared in the glorious march to and relief of Lucknow, under the command of the noble and heroic Havelock ; had avenged the blood of his countrymen, countrywomen, and children at Cawnpore ; and led the storming-party at the brilliant capture of Delhi, where four thousand gallant British soldiers, with scarcely any artillery, attacked and stormed a strongly-fortified, immense city, defended by more than forty thousand ferocious mutineers and large batteries of every kind of artillery ; and showed to the world that with competent leaders there is no human difficulty that cannot be overcome, and no mortal achievement beyond the compass of British skill, courage, and perseverance.

Never, perhaps, in the history of the world was there so sudden and terrible an outbreak against a dominant power as that of the sepoys in Bengal against their British masters ; or such horrible barbarities ruthlessly perpetrated upon weak, delicate, un-

offending women and children as were committed by them ; and never was there a nation that so soon and so signally avenged her insulted authority, and dealt such stern, speedy retribution upon the heads of the blood-stained murderers of her unsuspecting subjects as was done by Great Britain at that fearful crisis of her power in India. And never were the grandeur and almost boundless resources of the country so magnificently displayed as at that time. No other nation in the world could have met such a calamity without having its power completely and for ever broken ; or, having met it, could have so soon subdued so mighty an army of savage mutineers, and established its authority on a firmer and more lasting basis than before—thanks to the matchless courage, promptitude, talents, and endurance of such men as Lawrence and Inglis, Outram, Havelock and Wilson, and many others ; and the masterly skill, energy, fortitude, and inexhaustible mental and physical resources of the gallant old Sir Colin Campbell, and the bravery of his well-tried British soldiers, whose noble qualities were never more conspicuously exhibited than on that trying occasion ; and whose achievements

will be remembered by their grateful country as long as the empire they saved continues one of the brightest jewels in the crown of Queen Victoria and her successors.

But as our narrative relates only to one among the many equally gallant soldiers engaged in those brilliant achievements, we must be content to return to our humble sphere and proscribed limits of observation, and leave these grander themes for the Alisons, Hallams, Froudes, Macaulays of the next generation, to be dealt with and reproduced to their readers as their own genius and skill may inspire.

To return, then, to our hero. Amid the many brave and gallant officers who distinguished themselves during those hazardous but brilliant achievements, there was not one who displayed more aptitude for the performance of his duties, intelligence in their discharge, or courage and skill in their execution, than Captain Haverty, with his terrible Ninety-third. Twice had he been publicly thanked at the head of his regiment by his gallant old commander for his distinguished services: and had already been rewarded the rank of major before the taking of Delhi, where he achieved still higher honour, and a well-earned colonelcy.

Happy rather for the pleasure his fame and advancement would give his parents, and ever present Blanche Wyndham, than for any gratification he derived from it himself—except that satisfaction which every true man feels when he knows that he has not only done his duty, but to the approval and appreciation of his country—William Haverty bore his advancement and honours, as he bore two or three wounds he received in attaining them, with the modest equanimity of real merit and genuine heroism.

Perhaps no one felt the increased dignity and importance of our hero more than his faithful follower, Patrick O'Brien, who regarded every step of advancement and every honour achieved by him, quite as much as a fresh distinction conferred upon himself as upon his master. Nor had Patrick been without his own share of the dangers and honours of the campaign, for, though strictly speaking only a civilian, he was not the man to remain simply a spectator at a time when fighting was going on, and when the services of even one brave, strong man were important to his country. Having obtained permission from his master, he volunteered into the regiment in which Captain Haverty com-

manded, and in all his dangers and successes was by his side, striking down his despised enemies, or rushing up and spearing them at their own guns, with as much coolness and courage as if their glittering sabres had been peeled willows, their rifles popguns, and their roaring cannons harmless playthings ; though he had several times narrowly escaped being cut down by over-powering numbers of the enemy, and received two or three wounds also.

It was not before the army was approaching Lucknow for the second time, which was now closely besieged by an immense host of the mutineers, with a large and well-supplied train of artillery, that the letter written by Mary Packer reached Patrick O'Brien ; his master, now Colonel Haverty having long before received one in reply to his, from his father, informing him of the indisposition, as he called it, of Blanche Wyndham, but in which there was nothing to excite his fears, or anxiety on her account, though he might be a little uneasy, and disappointed too, at not receiving one from herself.

‘Och now, I wonder what’s in you, an’ where ye come from,’ said Patrick, apostrophising the letter as he turned it over in his

hand, when he found an opportunity to look at it by himself ; for he had tact enough not to betray his inability to read even its superscription to his comrades. ‘ Sure now, an’ ye’re not a telly-graffy, are ye ? ’ he said musingly. ‘ Bedad ! I wish I had been larned to rade writin’, that I might know what this bit o’ paper says. Sure an’ it can’t be a dispatch about that Misther Murray bisness, can it ? No, it isn’t big enough for a telly-graffy about that. Maybe it’s somebody left me a fortun’, or half an acre to grow praties on in ould Ireland—or a love-litter from—och bedad ! now I know what it is—hurray ! It’s a love-litter from that darlint girl, Mary Packer, an’ I shall go an’ ask his honour the colonel to rade it for me. Bad luck to that ould Father O’Leary, for not tachin’ me to rade writin’, afther bein’ paid three ha’pence a week for my edication for more than a month and a quarter, too ! But his honour will rade it for me, an’ tell me the contints, which will be jist the same thing, an’ save me the throuble into the bargain.’

Having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion, Patrick O’Brien resolved to ask his master to read his letter for him as soon as he returned to his own tent, for, although

whenever any fighting was going on, Patrick was always in the midst, or rather in the front, of it, at other times he still retained his position as servant to Colonel Haverty, and was, therefore, generally to be found near his person or about his quarters.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER a long and fatiguing march over hot, arid sands, and without a cloud or shade of any kind to shelter them from the scorching rays of the burning sun, harassed by countless hordes of crafty, vindictive enemies, but which invariably fled before the avenging steel of the British soldiers, the iron-nerved, little, wiry old Campbell (now Lord Clyde) was again preparing for another grand attack upon the rebel-army, strongly encamped and closely besieging Lucknow, which the gallant old general was resolved, at any cost, to relieve of their presence, and free the numerous ladies and civilians who had taken refuge in it from the impending dangers by which they were daily surrounded.

At the same time that Patrick O'Brien was speculating upon the contents of the

letter he had received, and making up his mind to ask his master to read it for him, Colonel Haverty was attending a council in the general's tent, where the plan of attack intended for the next morning was being explained to his gallant officers by Lord Clyde. After everything had been fully arranged, and every division of the army assigned to its proper place, the council separated, and the various leaders sought their own tents, to get a few hours' rest before the attack upon the enemy in the morning, which was to take place soon after midnight.

‘Now, Haverty,’ said the general, as the council broke up, with as little appearance of care or anxiety in the weather-worn features, and clear, good-humoured eyes, as if the subject in which they had been engaged was of the most unimportant nature, ‘I want you to stay and have a game at draughts with me, before you go to your tent. I don’t care about chess to-night, and would like a game of the other for a change. What do you say?’

‘I’ve no objection, as I’ve nothing particular to arrange this evening.’

‘Well, come on ; and I’ll see if I can find enough for your supper as well as my own

before you go. Get the board and the men ready, while I prepare myself for action,' said the general, pointing to the draught-board which was placed in a corner of the tent, and at the same time throwing off his plumed hat, gold-braided coat and waistcoat, and light cravat; undoing his braces and fastening them round his waist to keep his trousers up. 'Now,' said he, unbuttoning his shirt-collar as he spoke, and seating himself upon a hard, bare camp-stool, 'I'm comfortable at last. Sit down here and let's begin. Black or white for first move?'

'Black,' said William Haverty, seating himself at the opposite side of a small wooden table, and pointing to the right hand of his host.

'It's white! Hurrah! I've the first move,' exclaimed the brave old man, as gaily as if he had been a boy of eighteen. 'Now you shall see how the white men can beat the black,' playing as he spoke.

'I've seen that pretty often of late,' quietly returned his antagonist.

'Well, you shall see it again before long, or I'm very much mistaken.'

'On the board, or in the field?' inquired our hero, preparing to return his leader's move.

‘ Both ! for a bottle of champagne, when we get back to England. I wish I had one here now ; only as there’s no ice near, I’m afraid it would be as hot as everything else, and go off in vapour before we could drink it.’

‘ Well, for the latter defeat, I shouldn’t mind risking a bottle of champagne, even were it more within our reach than it seems to be, only I fear it would be on the same side as yourself, so it’s of no use ; but for the other, I’m not quite so sure about it,’ returned Colonel Haverty, looking cautiously over the board, and making another move.

‘ Oh, you think the one will be a more difficult task than the other, do you ?’ said Lord Clyde, smiling.

‘ I shall endeavour to make it so, at all events, if I can,’ replied his opponent, with a smile.

‘ Well, go on. Take that man,’ said the general, placing a man in a line to be taken. ‘ I see what you want, but I never allow my men to be charged in the flank in that way.’

‘ Ah a bad move of mine, I see. I lose two by it. I was in hopes you might not have seen it, and then I should have made

some havoc among that solid square of yours.'

'Oh, were you? But my opponents generally find it rather dangerous to count upon such contingencies. Here's another for you.'

'Thank you, you're very liberal. So I'll give you that in return.'

'Ah, you have me there though! I shall lose a man by that last move of mine,' exclaimed the general with a quick keen glance at the board, as if the move by which he had exposed himself to the loss of a man had roused him into greater caution and attention to the game. 'Never mind, I shall recover myself yet. There, take that,' he added after a moment's thoughtful look at his men, and the position of his opponent at the same time.

'Ah, you're down upon me there, I see,' said Colonel Haverty, taking the man that was offered, while Lord Clyde took two in return.

As the numbers of the men grew less the interest of the play increased. The game was a long and keenly contested one; and perhaps neither of the players paid more deep attention to the most important movements of contending armies than they did to

the shifting positions of their men in this game of draughts, in which all the skill and ingenuity of two practised players were employed and exerted to the utmost to secure the victory.

After an admirably contested game of more than an hour, Lord Clyde was the conqueror.

‘Well, mine at last,’ said he, looking up and wiping his forehead. ‘I told you so. But I hope those villainous mutineers won’t give me as much trouble to cut them up to-morrow.’

‘I wonder if it really is the case that the Nana’s among them,’ remarked Colonel Haverty, as he closed the board and put the men inside of it.

‘By Heaven ! I wish it may be the case !’ exclaimed the general ; ‘I’d give a thousand pounds to see his infernal face among them, and twice the amount to have the gratification of running my sword through his base, traitorous heart.’

‘I’m afraid he would have little chance of falling into your hands before his traitorous heart had been pierced a good many times,’ replied the colonel, with a grim smile. ‘There’s not a man, I believe, in the whole

army, from the youngest drummer-boy upward, even to your excellency yourself, as it seems, who would not risk his life ten times over to have the same gratification that you wish for, of slaying the infernal monster who stood smiling by and commanding the horrible butchery of our countrywomen and children at Cawnpore. But I doubt very much if he will give us the chance, the vile, crafty villain !

‘ So do I ; I know the scoundrel of old, and I always thought him a cunning, fair-tongued rascal, who would one day or other turn traitor, if he ever saw the slightest chance of being successful in his treason. And though the general expression is that he is there, I doubt very much his venturing into such close proximity to his enemies, many of whom, both officers and men, know him too well personally to make any mistake in recognising him, and every one of whom has too much revenge in his breast for the base traitor and cowardly assassin, to allow him to escape if once within reach of his false heart.’

‘ I only wish he may be there, if it were for nothing else than the gratification it would give to our men, who are burning

with rage, and full of hope to meet him in the morning. I believe if we had only fifty men, and ordered them to attack the whole rebel army, they would do it with as much alacrity and spirit as if they were fifty thousand, if they thought there was a chance of meeting Nana Sahib in their charge,' said Colonel Haverty.

'Why, as for that, I believe they would do it if the devil himself were opposed to them—I mean in person,' replied the old general, with a humorous twinkle in his clear grey eye, 'instead of being there only in spirit—though that infernal wretch Nana Sahib, more a devil incarnate than a man, even for a corrupt, cruel, crafty Asiatic! which has always struck me as being about the worst, vilest, most dangerous specimen of the *genus homo*.'

One of Lord Clyde's British attendants now entered with a tray, and placed their frugal supper before the great general and his young friend.

An hour afterward, when Colonel Haverty returned to his tent, he found Patrick O'Brien waiting for him with rather more impatience in his look than was usual with that faithful attendant.

‘Well, Patrick,’ said his master, as he entered, ‘we’re going to have another brush with the rebels in a few hours.’

‘Och ! an’ it’s mysilf that’s mighty glad to heer it, yer honor,’ replied Patrick, gleefully.

‘You’ve got everything ready for action, I suppose ?

‘Sure an’ I have ! When was ever Patrick O’Brien not ready to mait the inimy, yer honor ?’ asked the Irishman, with a good-humoured, respectful grin.

‘Well, not only I, but the enemy themselves have generally found you quite ready for that. But what is that in your hand ?’ he inquired, seeing Patrick had a letter, which he probably imagined was for himself, the thought of Blanche Wyndham flashing through his heart, and thrilling every nerve at the same time. ‘Is it for me ? I see there’s the English post-mark upon it.’

‘No, yer honor ; it’s a dispatch for mysilf, if ye plaise,’ said Patrick, half-importantly and half-confusedly.

‘Oh, for you, is it ?’ said his master, in a tone of repressed disappointment, as he turned away, and then, pausing, added : ‘You’ll hear the battle-call soon after midnight, so you had better lie down and get an

hour or two's sleep to refresh yourself, as I expect we shall have a hard day of it to-morrow. The rebels are in a very strong position, and have a great many cannon, as well as four times our number of men. And they say Nana Sahib is with them, too.'

'Och ! then it's mysilf that's mighty glad to heer it,' cried Patrick. 'An', by the powers ! if Patrick O'Brien comes across that murtherin' villain Nanah Sawhib, and let's him escape, may he never more disgrace the honour o' the British army ! an' may the ghost o' his father disown him in the other wourld as a cowardly spaldeen, unworthy o' his country an' the name o' a souldyer !'

'I think there's little chance of his escape if he's there, and ventures within reach of our army, Patrick. There is scarcely a man but is as determined as you are to make short work of the wretch if he comes across him.'

'But, plaise yer honor, if I may be so bould,' said Patrick, with a good deal of hesitating confusion in his look, 'would yer worship condescend to rade this dispatch for me afore ye go ?'

'Oh, I forgot you couldn't read it yourself. But wouldn't you rather that some one else read it for you ?'

‘Sure an’ yer honor doesn’t think I would dishonour the profission an’ yer worship’s service into the bargain by lettin’ anybody else know I can’t rade writin’, an’ ask him to rade my litter for me?’ exclaimed Patrick, holding out the letter to his master.

‘Why, it has the Westdon post-mark on it,’ said the colonel, with a slight start, suddenly checking the smile that was rising in his face at the quaintness of his servant’s remarks.

‘Sure an’ I suppose it has, yer honor,’ replied Patrick, quietly; ‘an’ my own name on the outside ov it, too,’ he added, half-proudly.

‘Yes; although the address is rather a wide one, which, I suppose, is the cause of its having been so long in reaching you, for I see, by the date it was posted, it has been more than six months on the road. But are you quite sure you would rather not get some one else to read it for you? There may be something in it that the person who wrote it did not expect me to see, and that neither of you would wish me to know.’

‘Sure an’ they shouldn’t ha’ put it in thin?’ replied Patrick, decisively. ‘If paiple write to Patrick O’Brien they shouldn’t put sacrits in their litters.’

'Very well, then. I suppose I may open it ?'

'Yes ; if it plaise yer honor.'

'Why, what a long epistle,' remarked the colonel, as he took the letter out of the envelope. 'Who is all this from ? I see it's in a woman's handwriting.'

'Sure an' I don't know, unless it's from—— But isn't the name inside, yer honor ?' asked Patrick, disappointedly.

'I daresay it is. Oh, I see,' replied his master, turning over the letter, and looking at the signature at the bottom of the last page. 'Why, it's from Mary Packer, one of my mother's servants,' he added, smiling.

'Och, thin ! an' I'm proud to heer it, yer honor,' exclaimed Patrick, anxiously waiting to learn its contents.

As the reader has already been somewhat informed of the contents of the letter, we will not now recapitulate them ; but rather allude to its effects upon Colonel Haverty, who, the moment he read that portion of it relating to Mr. James Murray's renewed attempts upon Blanche Wyndham, and the clause in her father's will wishing her to marry that gentleman, he staggered and shook as if a ball had unexpectedly pierced him through the heart. Even Patrick himself seemed quite

regardless of the rest of the letter after that. And had Mary Packer seen the slight effect produced on him by her tender phrases to himself, she, I fear, would have been less gratified than she would have altogether liked. But O'Brien's mind and feelings were too much taken by surprise and absorbed in the grief of his master to have any thoughts, at present, to bestow upon either Mary Packer or himself. He quietly took up the letter, which had fallen from his master's hands, folded it, and put it into his pocket; and then paused with clenched teeth, as if to keep in his rage before his master, who had sunk down upon a camp-stool in the corner of the tent, and sat as if stunned by the unexpected intelligence he had just read.

‘I beg yer honor’s pardon,’ said Patrick anxiously, after a moment’s timid pause, ‘but I didn’t know there was anything about yer worship or the young lady at Bilford Hall in the litter, or I’d ha’ cut off my right hand afore I’d ha’ gived it to ye. I hope yer honor won’t be displeased at me for takin’ the liberty o’ askin’ ye to rade it, an’ gravin’ ye with sich ill news.’

‘No, Patrick, my good fellow, I’m not displeased with you. This sudden intelli-

gence has rather taken me by surprise ; but I shall be all right presently,' said William Haverty, rousing himself, as if ashamed of having betrayed so much emotion before his servant. ' You may leave me for the present. You had better go and lie down and have a little sleep before the bugle sounds to arms in the morning. Thank God ! ' he muttered to himself, as Patrick went into an outer compartment of the tent, ' the hour is so near and the rebels so strong ! ' and there was a grim ghastly smile on his pallid face as he said this that would have startled an observer, had there been one.

‘ And so,’ he continued, in the same low tone of bitter disappointment and repressed emotion—‘ and so this is the end of all my dreams ! And she who has been the star of my life must after all become the wife of that wretched hound, Murray ! Poor Blanche ! ’ he said, in a more tender tone ; ‘ and you must be sacrificed to that worthless knave in accordance with the foolish will of your father. And yet I did not think he meant this at the time of his death ; and why did he not tell me so then ? O God ! it is very hard to see my happiness snatched from me and turned into gall in this way ! But it

won't be for long; a few hours more and it will be all over! For me to live and know her to be the wife of another is more than I could endure. Perhaps she is so already. No, no! I cannot believe her that yet! My father would have told me, and he has not even mentioned that subject in any of the letters I have received from him—only that she still continues unwell. Poor Blanche! I see now the cause of your illness. Perhaps you'll be better and happier in the lot that is fated to you, when you know that it can no more affect me. Yes; in a few hours I shall be beyond the influence of human misery, as I now am of human joy. And now, ye Bengal tigers! he cried, starting up and pointing his hand in the direction of the rebel camp, 'one more victim is ready to be sacrificed to your revenge! Let your rifles be well aimed, and your spears be sharp, and one whose sword never spared you will thank you for the bullet or the thrust!'

Carried away by the terrible excitement of his feelings, Colonel Haverty almost shouted as he said this. The next moment there was a knock upon one of the iron posts of his tent, as of some one striking it slightly with something hard.

‘Who’s there?’ he demanded, startled, recalled to himself in an instant, mechanically laying his hand upon his sword with one hand, and snatching up a revolver, which was lying before him, with the other.

‘It’s me, plaise yer honor,’ said Patrick O’Brien, partially drawing aside the canvas which served as a curtain across the doorway between his master’s private compartment and the rest of the tent.

‘Well, what is it, Patrick?’ he inquired in rather a sharper tone than usual, dropping the hilt of his sword and putting down the pistol. ‘I thought you had been asleep long since,’ he added more mildly, seeing the half-frightened look of his servant.

‘I want to spake to yer honor, if ye plaise,’ said Patrick, in a melancholy tone.

‘Well, speak on, and then leave me for a short time. I want to be alone,’ replied his master somewhat impatiently.

‘Plaise yer honor, it’s jist that same that I want. I want to laive ye,’ rejoined Patrick, stepping within the partition and dropping the canvas behind him across the entrance, standing erect and motionless as a statue.

‘Leave me! What do you mean, Patrick?’ inquired his master in surprise. ‘I didn’t

mean that I wished you to leave me altogether—not till—till after to-morrow. Where do you want to go ?

‘ Home, plaise yer honor. To England, I mane.’

‘ To England !’ said the colonel. ‘ What’s put that in your head all at once ? Oh, I suppose it’s—it’s that letter.’

‘ Yes, and plaise yer honor, it’s just that,’ answered Patrick.

‘ Well, after to-morrow, I daresay you’ll have nothing to detain you here—I mean there will be nothing to prevent your going,’ said his master, with some confusion. ‘ Of course you don’t need to join the attack on the rebels, unless you like ; and perhaps you had better not. But you’ll stay and carry news of my—the account of the engagement, I mean, home with you.’

Patrick O’Brien stared at his master for a moment, as if he scarcely comprehended him, and yet had some vague suspicion of what he meant.

‘ Sure, an’ yer honour doesn’t think that Patrick O’Brien’s the lad to turn his back on the inimy, and desirt yer worship like a cowardly spaldeen in that way ?’ said he, after a moment’s pause : ‘ it’s not the inimy

here that I care about at all, at all. An' plaise yer honour, I shall take my ould place near yersilf, an' let ye see that it's not the Saypoys I'm afraid of. But after that, if yer honor'll give me my discharge, I shall be mighty grateful to ye.'

'In all probability you won't require any discharge from me by that time,' William Haverty gloomily muttered to himself. 'You say you wish to go back to England. To Bilford, I suppose,' he said aloud.

'Yes, yer honour.'

'And what may have caused you to come to so sudden a resolution to leave me, and go back there? Is it Mary Packer's letter?'

'Yes, plaise yer worship.'

'Humph! You're in a hurry to marry her, I suppose.'

'No, yer honour; it isn't for that.'

'Indeed; what is it, then? I had no idea you were so tired of my service as to leave me for anything less than that.'

'I wouldn't laive yer honor's sarvice to be made geniral of this army,' returned Patrick, with something like a tremor in his voice. 'An' it's only to sarve yer worship that I want to laive ye now, an' go to England.'

‘To serve me, Patrick ! Why, I didn’t know that there were any affairs of mine that required your personal superintendence just now,’ said his master, with a surprised look.

‘Sure an’ I do though, beggin’ yer honor’s pardin for makin’ so bould. But there’s that cowardly villain o’ a gintilman, Misther Murray, who’s bain a-tryin’ to get hould o’ that young lady, Miss Wyndham, an’ most broken the heart o’ the dear young angel by tellin’ her that her father made his will that she was to marry him, the unmanly spalpeen ! which, savin’ yer honor’s presence, I don’t belaive a word on. I didn’t know so little o’ what the old gintilman, Mr. Wyndham, said about that same afore he died, not to know better than that—unless the will, as they call it, was made so long afore he died that it isn’t his last will at all, at all.’

William Haverty had allowed his servant to proceed, partly from indifference and partly from an unwillingness to hurt the poor fellow’s feelings by checking what he knew was solely the result of affection for himself. But as Patrick went on, he could not help feeling a certain amount of interest in his remarks ;

particularly with regard to what he said about the will's having been made some time before Mr. Wyndham's death, when it was not at all improbable that some wish might be expressed in it respecting his daughter marrying James Murray. But whether Miss Wyndham or her mother might consider it binding upon her to comply with such a wish as that now, especially after what had occurred between Blanche and himself, and the entire concurrence and approval of her mother, also, that she should marry him as soon as he returned from India —it was evident that the shock given to Blanche's feelings on Mr. Murray's renewal of his obnoxious suit, and of his informing her of the wish contained in the will, which doubtless her mother and General Fielden had kept from her to save her from any unpleasant thoughts upon the subject, because they did not intend she should comply with it, arose entirely from her aversion to that gentleman, and her deep and unshaken regard for himself. Was it therefore generous toward herself, rashly to expose himself to unnecessary peril to-morrow; or to rush into any danger for the purpose of ending a life which was not only useful to his country, but

perhaps necessary to the happiness of her who, in the first burst of his emotion, he imagined might be relieved from a source of uneasiness by his death? And his parents, too! Would it not add tenfold to their grief, if they knew that his death had been rather the result of his own premeditated madness than the usual chances of war? Would his honoured, brave old father, and his loving, gentle old mother, and all his friends and connections, not feel that they had rather been disgraced by his suicidal rashness, than honoured by his death in defence of the honour and rights of his country? What would Blanche herself think? Would not she look upon such conduct as the result of jealous passion rather than deep-rooted love and unselfish devotion to her happiness? And still more, with such turbulent passions raging within his heart, was he in a fit state to rush into the presence of the Great Judge, before he was sent for? If he fell in the brave discharge of his duty, in the cause of his country, against the enemy, unswayed by the evil passions of private rage or personal hatred, then his fall would be not only honourable, but free from the guilt of a self-sought death. But to seek by that to escape

from his trials and disappointments, however hard and severe they might be, and perhaps 'fly to others that he knew not of,' which might be not only immeasurably worse to bear, but unending in their duration, was not only a wickedness but a folly, as well as a moral cowardice, which might well fill the mind of any man with the most serious apprehension for its incomprehensible consequences, and make him shrink from the ignominy of leaving a name stained with such dishonour behind him.

'No, no,' he mused, as these thoughts hurriedly passed through his mind. 'I cannot be guilty of such sinful folly. God, forgive me for my fierce insubordination to Thy will, and give me patience to bear the trials Thou deemest fit to send me.'

'Well, Patrick, perhaps you are right after all,' said he, addressing his servant, who had stood keenly observant of his countenance, but erect and motionless, during his master's silence. 'But what benefit do you think your presence in England can be to either the young lady or myself? for I see it is entirely in the hope of serving me that you wish to go there.'

'Benefit, yer honor!' exclaimed Patrick,

pleased to see the change in his master's look. 'Sure an' I'll prevint that villain Murray—bad luck to him for an unmannerly blaguard!—from gettin' hould o' the young lady; an' see that nobody else attimpts that same; an' tell her that yer honor worships her as if ye war a papist an' herself a saint or an angel—which, bedad! I almost belaive she is, for sich a swait, purty face an' sich bright gintle eyes were, sure, niver sain but in the picters o' saints an' angels!—beggin' yer honor's pardon for makin' so bould as to spake about the young lady.'

'Why, Patrick, I didn't know you had so much admiration for Miss Wyndham,' said Colonel Haverty, smiling in spite of himself at the honest enthusiasm of his servant. 'But I'm afraid,' he added more gravely, after a moment's pause, 'that your presence at Bilford would scarcely be regarded of importance enough to prevent her from marrying Mr. James Murray, if she and her mother should think it their duty to carry out the wishes contained in Mr. Wyndham's will.'

'But, plaise yer honor, I know they won't think that, if I tell them ye're comin' home, as soon as the war's over, to marry the young lady: and I don't belaive they think

so now,' urged Patrick, with respectful but honest freedom. 'It's only that lyin' thaif o' a baste—savin' yer worship's presince—Murray, that wants to decaive them by tellin' them so.'

'But he could not deceive them by telling them so, if it was not really the case,' said the colonel, neither uninterested nor displeased at the well-meaning freedom of his servant.

'Och, yer honour, I'm not so sartin about that same. A cowardly spalpeen like him would do anything but fight like an honest man, or a gintilman, for the love o' a lady,' returned Patrick, with a contemptuous look.

'But I doubt if your being there would have much influence in counteracting his schemes,' said our hero, thoughtfully.

'Och, wouldn't it, yer honour? By my sowl! I should jist like to see him be afther any o' his decaivin' when I'm there. Patrick O'Brien's jist the bhoy to circumvint a villain like him!'

'No, Patrick, if that's your only motive for wishing to go to England, I think you had better stay here. I fear it would be of no service either to me or yourself, or the young lady you feel interested in. Besides, I could not allow you to go upon any such

errand. It is now time to try to get a little rest before our early attack upon the rebels. After that has been made, I may then consider your proposal again ; but, at present, I do not think I can consent to your going to England upon business so delicate as this. You had better leave me now, as I want to write a little ; and should I, by chance, fall in battle to-morrow, you will find one or two letters which I wish you to take special care of till you return to England, and deliver them as they shall be directed ; and also some instructions for yourself relative to my personal effects and——'

‘Och, yer honor, doan’t be a-killin’ me by spakin’ o’ that !’ exclaimed Patrick, interrupting him, almost crying at the gloomy tone in which the last few words were uttered. ‘Sure an’ yer honor doesn’t mane to let them villains o’ Saypoys murther ye to-morrow ! By the saints, they shan’t do it while Patrick O’Brien’s alive, at all evints !’

‘Thank you, Patrick,’ replied his master, cheerfully ; ‘I only mentioned this in case anything of the kind happens, as we are never sure of what may take place on a battle-field. Depend upon it, the Sepoys shan’t kill me if I can help it ; so good-night.’

‘Good-night, yer honor,’ said Patrick, leaving the compartment, and drawing the canvas across the opening which served as a door between it and the outer division occupied by himself, muttering, at the same time to himself :

‘No, by the Lord ! they shan’t while Patrick O’Brien has a rifle to use, or a bit o’ cowld stail in the shape o’ a baggonet, or a sword to defend ye with !’

CHAPTER XI.

THE engagement next day was one of the severest that had been fought during the whole of the war. The rebels were not only, as usual, immensely superior to their assailants in numbers — being fully four times more powerful in this respect, and occupying a strong position which was defended by a large number of first-rate cannon—but fought with an amount of skill and courage which they seldom or never before had shown in the face of their enemies. It was evident they were now under the command of a leader who was not only well acquainted with military tactics, but who possessed considerable ability as a general. Lord Clyde very soon discovered this, and was glad to find he had at last met with an opponent somewhat more worthy of himself and the

small but gallant army he commanded. He felt sure he had now before him a better man than the cowardly traitor and ruthless butcher Nana Sahib, as had at first been supposed, and his army still believed. Nor was he mistaken.

The mutineers were now commanded by almost the only rebel chief worthy the name of a leader, and who showed on the present occasion a skill and promptitude in the management of his forces, very much at variance with the incapacity and want of arrangement generally exhibited by mutineers. He fought like a man who felt that defeat would be not only ruinous to himself and his pretensions, but to the whole cause for which he had conspired against the British Government, and assisted to massacre, in cold blood, so many unsuspecting, defenceless British subjects; while, at the same time, aided by the great superiority in numbers and artillery, he was ever ready to meet his assailants, and for a time to resist their charges, and take advantage of every movement that enabled him to harass his enemies in return; and even succeeded in not only repelling an ill-timed and weakly-executed attack, which the impatient vanity

of an English brigadier had prompted him to make, in opposition to the positive instructions of Lord Clyde, but for a few minutes, till the manœuvre was defeated by the British commander, seriously imperilling the position of the whole army. But, small as his numbers were, the gallant old Campbell, like a truly great general, was prepared for every emergency ; and, detecting in a moment the false movement of the brigadier, immediately despatched part of the Ninety-third and the Ninth Lancers to his assistance.

‘ By Heaven, Haverty ! ’ exclaimed Lord Clyde, with impatient surprise, ‘ if Stratford hasn’t not only disobeyed my orders not to advance, but attacked the very strongest part of the enemy’s position, and been repulsed ! And the rebels are pouring down upon him like devils ! Now, my gallant Ninety-third and brave Ninth Lancers—on to the rescue ! At them, Haverty ! ’

The last three words were addressed to our hero, who had just returned from a most brilliant and successful charge against the rebels, having captured several guns and completely destroyed a strong body of their men, more than ten times his own number, and carried a position of the greatest import-

ance to the British army, and the loss of which was of the most serious consequence to the mutineers.

With the loud ringing shout of men who are confident of victory, and proud of their leader, away went the glorious Ninety-third, with their brave colonel at their lead, whom his men knew too well to have any anxiety as to the result ; and on swiftly dashed to their support a glittering brigade of the gallant Ninth Lancers, cheering as they rushed to the charge, and making their enemies reel before them, treading them down and cutting them to pieces like corn before the sickles of the reapers.

In a few minutes not only the repulse of the self-confident Stratford was retrieved, but the position he had failed in his ill-concerted attack upon was completely carried, the enemy's guns captured, and a large number of the rebels slain and put to flight. With the generosity of a truly noble mind, Lord Clyde ordered Stratford and his galled brigade immediately to charge the routed enemy, and afterwards to hold the position they had at first failed in gaining, which they did throughout the rest of the battle, with a courage and destruction to the Sepoy

ranks that amply atoned for the slight reverse they had at first sustained.

The slaughter was most terrific. No quarter was asked or given to the rebels, whose treacherous revolt and inhuman atrocities, unparalleled as they were unprovoked, placed them alike beyond the pale of either human sympathy or the claims of ordinary warfare. The avenging spirits of the betrayed, and murdered, and dishonoured British soldiers, women and children, steeled the hearts and nerved the arms of every man that day, as in every other day of battle in the whole army.

It was a sickening and an awful sight to see the frightful slaughter ; the pools of red, reeking blood ; the headless carcases, and dismembered limbs, and mangled bodies, lying in heaps upon the ground, or trodden under the fierce charge of infuriated men, and the bloody hoofs of plunging, charging horses ! God forgive the brave men who, maddened by the recollections of the fearful atrocities that had been perpetrated upon their countrymen and countrywomen — yea, upon their beloved wives, mothers, and children — forgot, in the moments of their revenge, that humanity

and merciful forbearance, which is generally one of the most glorious characteristics of British soldiers in the day of battle and in the hour of triumph ; and on the poor wretches, too, whose treachery and revolting cruelties had so completely cut them off from the mercy of their conquerors, and brought upon themselves the infliction of this just but terrible vengeance.

‘ Well done, Haverty, and my brave Ninety-third ! and you, gallant Ninth Lancers ! You have done your duty nobly and effectually, as you always do it ! ’ cried Lord Clyde, enthusiastically, as Colonel Haverty led back his breathless but unbroken brigade, hot, dusty, and blood-soiled, from their brilliant charge, whose loud cheers at hearing the well-deserved praise of their beloved commander, rose like a thunder-peal amid the battle-din, and, for a moment, was heard far above the rattle of rifles and the roar of artillery.

‘ Three cheers for our brave old general ! ’ shouted the men, giving vent to their feelings in a tremendous hurrah, which was taken up by the whole army. ‘ And for our gallant leader, Colonel Haverty ! ’ they shouted, repeating their cheer not less enthusiastically

for their colonel who, with Patrick O'Brien close behind him, was seen at that moment to bend suddenly forward upon his horse, and, but for the quickness of some of those around him, would have fallen to the ground.

In the earlier part of the engagement he had been struck by a rifle-ball in the right shoulder ; but he had not allowed it to make him retire from the action, during the whole of which he had fought and led on his men with a coolness, promptitude, courage, and skill, which had not only attracted the notice and high approbation of the commander-in-chief, but excited the admiration of the whole army ; and little would anyone have suspected, from his look or bearing, the harrowing emotions that had so lately shaken him, or the deep anxiety for Blanche Wyndham, that still lay heavily at his heart. Unless that there was, perhaps, rather less vivacity in his manner, and, it might be, a little more seriousness than usual in the calm determination of his bearing, there was nothing discernibly different in the conduct of Colonel Haverty from ordinary occasions of a like kind. His quick, perceptive energy, and comprehensive skilfulness of action, were never more conspicuously or successfully dis-

played than they were on that morning, or better appreciated by both his own men and his commander. But for all that, there was a gnawing, sinking sensation at his heart which, but for the better thoughts that had been excited within him, might have rendered him not only reckless of his own life, but made him less capable of discharging the important duties devolving upon him, by being made less keenly alive to what was going on around him.

It was not, however, the wound we have named that now affected him. In the brilliant charge, from which he had just returned, a rifle-ball had struck his left arm just above the elbow, and shattered it so severely that he had hardly power enough left in it to rein his horse ; after which it had entered the lower part of his breast, breaking two of his ribs and burying itself underneath. No one had either seen or suspected he was wounded ; not even Patrick O'Brien, who, ever by his side, had several times that day, quite unknown to him, struck down and slain Sepoys whose spears or rifles had been aimed and ready to take his life. Nor was Haverty himself aware of the dangerous nature of his wound when he received

it. He had felt a sharp crack against his arm, which seemed to take away nearly the whole of its power, and a rather severe wound in his side ; but, fortunately, his horse required little force to guide it, from its docile nature and good training ; and the heat and excitement of the battle had carried him along in the charge in almost unconsciousness of either pain or inconvenience, till the loss of blood and the dangerous nature of his wounds completely overcame him, and he dropped from his saddle in a state of insensibility, and fell into the arms of Patrick O'Brien, and some of his gallant soldiers of the Ninety-third, who were fortunately near enough to catch him before he reached the ground.

‘Good God, Haverty, you are wounded !’ exclaimed the warm-hearted, grey-haired old hero, Lord Clyde, as he saw it, springing from his horse like a young man of five-and-twenty, and talking hold of his powerless arm.

But poor William Haverty was utterly unconscious of both his commander’s anxiety and the grief of his followers.

‘Good Heavens !’ continued the noble old man, tremulous with agitation, ‘his arm is

completely shattered ! and see how the blood is oozing from his side. Ah ! what a gash ! he added with a shudder, after looking for a moment at the wound made by the rifle-bullet where it had entered his body. O God ! he's killed !

‘ Killed ! yer excillincy !’ shrieked Patrick O’Brien wildly, who had stood supporting the head of his beloved master against his bosom. ‘ Killed ! did ye say ? Killed an’ murthered by thim infernal Saypoys, an’ I didn’t prevint thim ! O my masther, my dear, good masther !

There was something so touching in the plaintive grief of Colonel Haverty’s faithful attendant that it brought tears into the eyes of several of the men who were around him, hot and excited as they were with the strife, and stained and grimed as they were with the blood of their enemies, and the smoke of battle. The brave old general himself was forced to turn away for a moment to hide his emotions at so moving a spectacle.

‘ No, no, my brave fellow,’ replied Lord Clyde, in a sympathetic voice, turning to Patrick. ‘ I hope he is not dead. He is severely wounded, I fear ; but I don’t think he is dead.’

There was an uneasiness and hesitation in the gallant old leader's voice as he said this, that almost belied his words. But he had other duties to perform than mourning for Colonel Haverty, even if his worst fears should be realised. The rebels were still strong and fighting fiercely, and the victory must be achieved before he could pause to give vent to either private grief or personal emotion. In another moment he was gone, galloping along to complete the triumph which his skilful arrangement and the valour of his troops had already began to accomplish, leaving our wounded hero to the care of a couple of surgeons, who had hastened to the spot, and immediately had him conveyed to his tent.

‘ Does yer honour think my master’s killed ?’ asked Patrick anxiously, addressing one of the surgeons, who glanced at him for a moment, half-austerely at first ; and then, observing the expression of deep emotion and grief that was in his face, more kindly, as he replied with a grave, hopeless shake of his head :

‘ I fear so,’ adding half to himself, ‘ if the bullet has entered the lungs, which I fear it has, the wound must be mortal.’

The fear that the doctors, of whom he stood much in awe, would order him out of the tent, alone prevented Patrick from again giving vent to his grief in another shriek, but his intense love for his master, and his determination to be near him, overcame every other feeling, and steeled his nerves to conceal his emotions, his only reply to the surgeon's words being a deep, half-strangled groan of inward anguish and despair.

CHAPTER XII.

‘G R E A T B A T T L E N E A R L U C K N O W !
T O T A L D E F E A T O F T H E R E B E L S !
D E A T H O F C O L O N E L H A V E R T Y ,
*Who had greatly distinguished himself in the
battle.*’

Such was the first brief announcement in large bold letters, of the glorious and important victory achieved by Lord Clyde over the mutineers, flashed by the electric telegraph into England about a month after the battle.

The message had been sent by the correspondent of the great source of public information, the *Times*, and by that mighty engine sent flying, not only to every corner of the kingdom, and to every country in Europe, but all over the world, to Australia and New

Zealand, to Canada and the United States, and back to India again, as well as to Paris and Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg, and every capital and town in France, Spain and Italy ; in Germany, Sweden and Turkey ; in Prussia, Holland and Russia. Wherever the Saxon tongue is spoken or understood, and wherever the light of European civilisation extends, there the all-powerful *Times* told the brief, startling, stirring tale of Britain's triumph and of Britain's loss.

Everywhere was the victory known, and everywhere was the announcement of the gallant Colonel Haverty's death carried with it. It was to little effect that the *Times*' own correspondent's despatch was preceded by that of the government, in which Colonel Haverty was reported to be 'severely and dangerously wounded.' The fact of his death was everywhere believed, the more especially as it appeared in the paper below the message received by the government, thereby giving it the appearance of later information, though, in reality, it was the earlier of the two, but precedence had been given the other out of courtesy.

General Fielden received the intelligence the same day that it appeared in the *Times*.

‘Great battle in Indy, sir,’ said the footman as he laid down the newspaper before his master in the afternoon of that day, as he was sitting in his small private room.

‘Indeed!’ said the general, hastily looking up, and tearing the wrapper from his paper.

‘Yes, sir; the coachman says it’s stuck up at the newspaper shops in the town, and is in all the papers,’ rejoined the footman, as he left the room, and the general hurriedly opened his paper in search of the news.

He was not long in finding it. The large letters were easily discernible among the small type of the rest of the newspaper; and if his soldierly and patriotic heart swelled with pride and satisfaction at the glorious news of his country’s triumph and defeat of the rebels, it sunk within him, and the paper fell from his hands at the fatal intelligence of the last line of the telegram.

‘Merciful Heaven!’ he exclaimed, in surprise and emotion, throwing up his hands. ‘William Haverty killed! Poor fellow!’ he repeated, after a short pause, speaking to himself in a low, sad tone of grief and sympathy. ‘So young and full of promise, and with such prospects before him! And his

father and mother, too,' he continued, after another pause, 'I grieve for them. They have lost a brave son, and our country has lost a noble soldier !'

A large tear trickled down the cheeks of the brave old general as he said this, and he sat for a few moments looking abstractedly out of the window, his lips slightly moving, as if trying to subdue the painful emotions excited by the intelligence he had just read.

' And poor Blanche Wyndham !' he muttered, as if thinking aloud ; ' how shall I tell her of this fatal news ? Poor girl ! yours is a hard fate. You are no sooner freed from an obnoxious engagement with a man your whole nature shrinks from, and who is not only utterly unworthy of you, but cares nothing for you, by the untimely death of your poor father, than he to whom you are so tenderly attached, and who is so deeply devoted to you, is called away to fight for his country, leaving the man who only seeks you for your fortune to resume his distasteful suit, and to try to frighten you into compliance with his schemes, by working on your feelings through an ill-timed, but afterwards ignored, wish of your father's which he has discovered to be

countenanced in his will ! And now, when you have scarcely recovered from the serious illness caused by the shock given to your feelings by Murray's attempted renewal of his suit, here comes the fatal news of poor William Haverty's death, which is the worst of all ! to extinguish the only hope of happiness that was left you ! Poor Blanche ! he sighed, after having again paused for a few moments, 'may God support you in your affliction, and send you comfort in, I fear, the sad loss that is before you.'

Again General Fielden slowly read the telegram in the paper, as if in the hope of seeing something that would justify him in thinking that part of it relating to Colonel Haverty might be incorrect. But after a careful perusal he looked up, and seriously shook his head, as he muttered in a sad voice :

' Ay, I fear it's too true ! There it stands —first that he's dangerously wounded, and then that he's dead. Poor fellow ! It's a dear-bought victory, I fear, for more persons than one in Bilford, that has been purchased with your life ! It will be a heavy blow for your poor father and mother ! God give them strength and resignation to His will to bear it ! I tremble to tell them ; and yet if

I don't go and do it, perhaps they may hear of it in some other way which will shock them all the more by not being prepared for it. Yes, I must go at once and communicate as cautiously as I can this fatal intelligence.'

So saying, General Fielden rose from his chair, folded the newspaper, put it into his pocket, and without venturing into the presence of Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche, who were in an adjoining room, put on his hat, and, with a stick in his hand as usual, took his way toward Colonel Haverty's, pondering much as he went along how he should proceed in his sad, delicate task of acquainting the unfortunate parents of their irreparable loss in the death of their beloved son.

CHAPTER XIII.

GENERAL FIELDEN had only been a few minutes gone, when a carriage drove up to his door and Mr. and Mrs. Ingram were ushered into the drawing-room, and announced to Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche, in the sitting-room where they usually sat.

‘Isn’t General Fielden at home?’ inquired Mrs. Wyndham of the footman, as if half-reluctant to see the visitors.

‘No, ma’am: he’s just gone out.’

‘Very well; you need not wait; I suppose I must see those people,’ said she rising from her chair, addressing her daughter, who, though perhaps a little paler than usual, and it might be rather less animated in her look, had now pretty well recovered from the illness she had had after her unexpected and painful interview with Mr. James Murray. Her

father's will had since then been read, and fully explained to her by her mother and General Fielden ; her own judgment as well as her feelings fully concurred with their opinion, that the will having been made during the time the intended marriage between herself and James Murray was expected to take place, but subsequent occurrences having not only prevented its fulfilment, but entirely changed the wishes and intentions of her father—for the strong aversion and dislike he had exhibited toward that gentleman, and the painful scene between them on the morning of his death, were too vividly impressed on their memories ever to lose their influence—she had no hesitation whatever but that she was acting in perfect accordance with his last wishes in refusing to admit the suit of James Murray to her consideration, or acknowledging that the will in any way made it incumbent on her to accept him as her husband. And even had she been less averse to him than she was, the manner in which he had tried to found a plea for her acceptance of him, rather upon what he himself knew was not the wishes of her father at the time of his death, than upon any consultation of her own feelings, was so

utterly repulsive to every sentiment of delicacy and honour, that it would have instantly repelled her from even listening to any proposals from a man so entirely devoid of all sentiments of either love for herself or respect for his own character.

Hateful as he was to her before, he was ten times more so after that interview in the lane. And she had taken care, since her recovery from its effects, not to give him another opportunity of meeting her alone : having never gone out of the general's grounds since that day without either her mother or the general to protect her from a repetition of his annoyance. Nor had she on any such occasion met him since, and both she and her mother again began to hope that, since she had then so indignantly repelled his advance, he had at length seen the uselessness of persisting in his suit, and had really given it up.

General Fielden, however, though he scarcely expressed it to them, entertained a different opinion. He strongly suspected that James Murray was either waiting till he found another favourable opportunity of renewing his suit, or had some other scheme in view by which he might hope to gain some

power or influence over her. He had therefore been more than usually vigilant in his guardianship of not only her mental happiness but her personal safety. He was the more anxious, being aware of the deep, pure and tender attachment he knew subsisted between Blanche and William Haverty ; at each fresh account of whose gallant conduct and brilliant achievements which came to England, her heart swelled and throbbed with all the thrilling joy of her warm, gentle nature, and all the proud admiration of unchanging love.

‘ I suppose you don’t want me to go with you, do you, mamma ? ’

‘ No, dear, unless you wish,’ said her mother.

‘ Well, I don’t care about seeing them. In fact I would rather not,’ returned Blanche.

‘ Don’t do so, then, dear. Only, as they are such old friends of General Fielden’s, I should not like him to think we do not treat them with respect,’ said the mother. ‘ They may perhaps think it strange, or that there is some motive or reason for your not being seen, if you do not go with me, as you have not done so the last two or three times they have called,’ she added, remembering that Mrs. Ingram had made a remark the last

time she was there, as if she had heard something to the effect that Blanche was kept almost a prisoner, and out of the sight of visitors by her mother—which was entirely Mrs. Ingram's own invention.

‘You don't mind meeting them, do you, dear?’ asked her mother.

‘No, mamma, not in the least,’ replied the daughter, with a quiet easy smile upon her fair face, rising to accompany her mother. ‘Only I don't care about them. They are such ostentatious, formal, unreal people.’

‘How do you do?’ said Mrs. Wyndham, as she entered the drawing-room and held out her hand to the lady visitor, who merely, as usual, touched it with the gloved tips of her fingers, as she affectedly replied, without rising from the chair on which she had sat on entering the room :

‘How do you do, Mrs. Wyndham? You'll excuse me, I know, for not rising. I feel so fatigued with our drive, and—and you know we are not *quite* so young as we were, either of us; are we, Mrs. Wyndham?’ she added in a feigned, confidential tone, with a look and an air intended rather to excite a demur on the part of her listener than acquiescence in her self-disparagement, as she glanced

complacently at her handsome dress and extensive crinoline skirts, spread out on each side and before her.

‘No ; we can’t prevent ourselves from growing old, Mrs. Ingram, let us do what we will,’ replied Mrs. Wyndham, innocently, who was at least twenty years younger than the insipid old woman before her.

‘Horrid, vulgar woman !’ thought the banker’s wife, slightly turning her head, and giving a cold shake of her fingers to Blanche, in vain trying to conceal her mortification.

‘And how do you do, Miss Wyndham ?’ said she, as Blanche returned her greeting and sat down beyond the circle of her skirts. ‘I am glad to see you looking so well ; why, my dear, you are getting quite beautiful !’ she added patronisingly, as if she was making a concession in acknowledging so much.

‘Why, my dear, Miss Wyndham was always so,’ said Mr. Ingram, with affected gallantry, who had in the meantime shaken hands with Mrs. Wyndham by coldly presenting the two first fingers of his right hand to hers, which she had scarcely with more cordiality accepted ; for, however genial and hospitable she naturally was, the chilly

atmosphere of the Ingrams made her now almost as formal as themselves. 'No wonder that the heads of half the young men in the county are turned when they see her,' he added with a pompous kind of smile.

'I am afraid there isn't very much in them then, Mr. Ingram,' replied Blanche, with a quiet curttness which, though perfectly polite, had a good deal of cutting sarcasm in it, slightly blushing at the same time.

'Ah, you shouldn't say that, when you know that a gentleman belonging to one of the very first families, and of the highest standing in society, is almost broken-hearted about——'

'Pray, Mr. Ingram, don't allude to anything so painfully disagreeable as that to my daughter, if you please,' said Mrs. Wyndham, hastily interrupting him, while Blanche suddenly changed colour, and could with difficulty conceal her agitation.

'Oh, I beg your pardon, and Miss Wyndham's too,' he replied, exchanging a glance with his wife. 'I—I didn't know that the subject was so—so disagreeable.'

'I assure you, Mrs. Wyndham, my husband had no idea that this was so *very* unpleasant to you. In fact we always thought,

at least while your worthy husband was alive, that it was quite the contrary; and have even heard since that—But never mind,' said Mrs. Ingram, checking herself, seeing the half-angry look that was rising in Mrs. Wyndham's face as well as in Blanche's; 'I won't say anything more about it, as I see it is so *very* disagreeable to you both.'

'I beg you won't,' replied Mrs. Wyndham, with repressed indignation; 'for I again assure you it is equally unpleasant and offensive to both my daughter and myself.'

There was a slight, rather constrained pause after this. The Ingoldsby, however, were too much people of the world, and had too little reality in their character, either to feel much embarrassment or to show the little they did feel.

'And how is my old and worthy friend General Fielden?' inquired Mr. Ingram, with a spurious kind of animation forced into his tone and manner.

'Thank you, he is as usual in good health and spirits,' replied Mrs. Wyndham, in her customary quiet politeness.

'I'm delighted to hear it. He's a noble old fellow!' rejoined Mr. Ingram, with a

pompous appearance of appreciation and regard.

‘Ay, he is indeed. I wish there were more like him in the world,’ returned Mrs. Wyndham, warmly.

‘I’m so sorry he’s not at home, that we might just have said “How do you do ?” to him, as we are here,’ remarked Mrs. Ingram.

‘I am very sorry too, as no doubt he would have been glad to see you,’ said Mrs. Wyndham. ‘He hadn’t been gone many minutes, I believe, when you came in.’

‘I’m sorry we missed him,’ returned Mr. Ingram, rising, observing that his wife had done so. ‘Oh ! by-the-bye,’ he said, stopping short before leaving the room, ‘I don’t suppose you care much about those sort of things, but you may tell him there has been another great battle in India, near Lucknow, I believe. Lord Clyde has gained another grand victory.’

‘Oh, General Fielden will be so pleased to hear it !’ said Mrs. Wyndham, with much interest and fervour, while Blanche started and trembled with anxiety at the intelligence. ‘And we are very much interested in it too, I assure you. The loss of life, I hope, among

our soldiers and officers has not been very great,' she added earnestly.

'No; I don't expect it, though we have not heard any particulars of the affair yet. But I believe the losses have generally been small in the late Indian victories,' replied Mr. Ingram, indifferently. 'At all events, I suppose there's nobody of much distinction killed, as the only name given in the telegraphic despatch,' he continued pompously, 'is a colonel's, I think, or some other inferior officer. Yes, a Colonel Haverty. Oh! by-the-bye, it isn't the son of your neighbour close by, and the general's friend, Colonel Haverty, is it? I remember something of a rather hot-headed young man, his son, who I've understood went out to India, and has pushed himself on a little there of late, I believe.'

'What!' exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham, trembling and turning pale; 'William Haverty isn't killed, is he?'

'Well, the despatch states so. But I see you are startled. If I had known it would have distressed you, I wouldn't have mentioned it,' replied Mr. Ingram, with perfect coolness. 'Good-morning,' he added, again presenting his two fingers to Mrs. Wyndham,

who could with the greatest difficulty constrain her feelings sufficiently to conceal her agitation from her unsympathising visitors and composedly bid them good-bye ; while Blanche, who had fortunately gone through the form of a parting shake of the hand with them both, before Mr. Ingram had given them the fatal news, stood petrified, pale and motionless as a statue, without moving a muscle or opening her compressed lips till they had left the room and passed the hall-door to their carriage.

Then with a wild, piercing shriek, as if her heart was broken, she staggered forward and fell into the open arms of her alarmed and deeply-distressed mother.

For some minutes nothing was heard in the room but a series of wild hysterical shrieks from poor Blanche, and the agitated voice of her weeping mother trying in vain to soothe and comfort her.

‘ Come, Blanche ! dear Blanche, do not give way to your feelings so, till we have really been assured of the truth of what we have heard,’ urged Mrs. Wyndham, in words almost inarticulate from emotion. ‘ It may be a mistake ; he may not be killed after all.’

‘Oh, mamma !’ almost screamed the poor girl in the agony of her tearless grief. ‘It is he ! I know it is William Haverty that’s killed ! They knew it too—and only told it to me to break my heart !’

‘No, no, dearest child ! don’t say that,’ cried the mother, pressing her daughter with passionate affection to her breast. ‘Don’t kill your poor mother too, by your grief !’ and the hot tears of the mother flowed down her cheeks and fell upon the soft white neck and bosom of her agonised child ; who now, exhausted with her terrible emotions, sank back in a swoon and was laid gently down upon a couch by her mother.

Blanche’s shrieks had been heard throughout the house, and Eliza Fleming, the housekeeper, and one or two more of the general’s servants, immediately made their appearance. The alarm and excitement in the household were immense. Blanche was a great favourite with everyone, not only on account of her gentle, considerate, amiable temper and disposition, but because of her trials and sufferings also, which she had ever borne with such uncomplaining meekness, though unyielding firmness.

‘Oh, ma’am ! what is the matter with dear

Miss Blanche?' exclaimed Eliza Fleming, as she entered the room and began to assist her mistress in loosening her daughter's dress.

'Run upstairs for some sal volatile, and bring both vinegar and cold water,' said the kind old housekeeper, addressing one of the other servants who were standing about the door of the room, who immediately ran off and returned with them in a few seconds.

'Thank you,' said Mrs. Wyndham, dipping her handkerchief in the vinegar and rubbing her daughter's forehead, mouth, and nose with it, while Eliza Fleming and the house-keeper each took a hand and began rubbing it with vinegar also.

Not another word was spoken for several minutes. Everyone seemed to be too much alarmed and anxious about Blanche to be able to speak, who every now and then gave a sharp, piercing cry and a kind of convulsive struggle which went to the hearts of everyone that saw or heard her.

It was long before she began to show any symptoms of returning consciousness. At length, though to all appearance still perfectly insensible, a few large tears came from her closed eyes, then a few more, and faster

and faster, till they streamed down her pallid cheeks in large glistening globules, like big, warm rain-drops in a thunderstorm.

‘Thank God for those tears !’ muttered her mother, in a low tone of deep earnestness. ‘She’ll have relief now.’

CHAPTER XIV.

GENERAL FIELDEN arrived just as Blanche Wyndham was beginning to recover her consciousness ; and was scarcely more alarmed than surprised at the commotion he found among his household.

‘ Good heavens, Mrs. Wyndham ! what is the matter with poor Blanche ? ’ he exclaimed, hastening into the room the moment he heard of her illness.

‘ Oh, general ! have you heard any news from India, or heard anything of another battle being fought there, and William Haverty being killed ? ’ cried she, dropping her agitated voice almost to a whisper at the last half-dozen words.

‘ Surely no one has been inconsiderate enough to tell you and your daughter that, during my absence ? ’ said the general, with a

look of angry surprise, unable to account for its being known in the house.

Blanche was now conscious, but sat pale and motionless, as if still not quite sensible of what was going on or said. The only indication of being able to comprehend what was passing, was a certain kind of wild, fervid earnestness in her glistening eyes, as she fixed them keenly and anxiously on the face of the general.

‘But is it true? Have you heard anything of it?’ inquired Mrs. Wyndham, with painful anxiety.

‘For God’s sake, Mrs. Wyndham, do try to compose yourself and your daughter!’ said the brave old soldier, shaking with agitation, in spite of his efforts to conceal it. ‘I have just seen some report of the kind in the newspaper; but I hope it may not be correct,—as far as William is concerned at least,’ he added, hesitatingly.

‘Oh, general, my poor child is almost broken-hearted! Have you any grounds for hoping the news may be incorrect?’ asked the mother, with eager anxiety. ‘Do you think it is so?’

The general was unwilling to excite false hope, but was anxious, if possible, to say

something that might serve to lessen the weight of deep despair which seemed to have settled down upon Blanche like a dark cloud, that had suddenly cast its gloomy shadow upon what had just before been a bright prospect. He paused for a moment, the settled face and dark eyes of the grief-stricken girl watching him with an intensity which seemed to penetrate his very heart and read his inmost thoughts.

‘I—I do not think we should give way to our fears and grief altogether,’ he said, speaking with an evident effort, and much hesitation, ‘till we have had some more positive and authentic intelligence of—of this sad event.’ He appeared to be afraid to trust himself to say more, and paused abruptly. Instantly, however, mastering his feelings, he continued in a more cheerful, affectionate tone, addressing Blanche: ‘Come, my dear girl, try to bear up against this affliction, at least till we have ascertained that he—that—that William Haverty really is——’

‘Oh, I know he is dead!’ cried Blanche, with a convulsive sob, interrupting the general, whose uneasy hesitation convinced her that he was trying to impart a hope to her that he did not feel, or felt very feebly

himself. ‘Dead—dead !’ she muttered hysterically, and with a half-wondering look which alarmed and cut her mother to the heart, and the gallant old general also. As for poor Eliza Fleming, though she neither spoke nor uttered the slightest sound, she sat half supporting the head and shoulders of her young mistress, her eyes literally streaming with tears. The good old house-keeper, who had also been very much overcome, and the rest of the servants of the house, had disappeared at the entrance of their master into the room.

‘Come, dearest Blanche !’ said the mother, in a tone of sad, earnest entreaty, gazing with anxious affection into the pale face and unnaturally bright eyes of her daughter ; ‘do not look so, and frighten your poor mother, whose heart is almost broken with grief.’

‘Oh, mamma, mamma !’ was all the reply Blanche could make, as she again bent forward on her mother’s bosom, and wept abundantly.

This time her tears seemed to relieve her, and after a few minutes she raised herself a little, calmer, though pale and weak as if she had just risen from a long and dangerous illness. Her few minutes of violent grief,

like the sudden rush of a furious hurricane—sweeping, crushing and destroying wherever it goes—had exhausted every portion of her strength, and left her feeble and powerless as a new-born infant.

‘God bless you, my own child, and help you to bear this terrible sorrow!’ said the mother. ‘Let us try to say, “Thy will be done!”’

‘Oh, mamma! do not be angry with me——’

‘No, no, dearest child! I am not angry with you!’ exclaimed the mother, hastily interrupting her, and affectionately kissing her pale face.

‘Oh, I know you are not, dearest mamma; I didn’t mean angry. But I feel as if I had not the power of saying what I do mean,’ replied Blanche, with a loving look at her mother’s anxious face. ‘I meant, do not think me weak and foolish for giving way so to my feelings. But it was so very sudden and unexpected, and poor William——’ she paused, tearfully.

‘Loved you as his own soul, and was the only man worthy of your regard!’ exclaimed General Fielden, warmly. ‘I would have given my life to have saved you from this

affliction, my dear Blanche. But God's will be done ! " he muttered, with repressed emotion, taking her hand affectionately in his, as if she had been his own child. And yet there was something in the deep sympathy of his tone and manner which sent a fresh chill to her heart ; for it dispelled the last, faint, lingering ray of hope that had still feebly hovered there—that the general still hoped the intelligence of her beloved one's death might be incorrect. But she now both saw and felt that General Fielden entertained no doubt, in his own mind, that the fatal news was true.

Poor Blanche ! All was now total and impenetrable darkness within, before, and around her ! The past had closed upon her for ever, as a fitful though bright dream, which could never more return to her ; the present was a dark, stern reality of anguish and despair, without one single ray of light or hope for the future ! The future ! What could any future be to her without the long-cherished love and companionship of him who was now for ever taken from her ? Only a lonely, dreary, objectless existence, without the communion, mutual love, and sympathy of that one loving heart, with which every-

thing would have been bright, pure, and happy, and without which everything was cheerless, dark, and repulsive. Oh that God would call her away also, and in the regions of everlasting life and blessedness unite her to him she had so fondly hoped to become united to on earth, but who was now for ever beyond the reach of human ties and human sympathies ! And yet, was it possible that he could never more return to gladden her heart and reciprocate her love ? Could it really be true that he was dead ? that she should never more hear his dear voice, never more listen to his tender, loving words ? never again meet the deep, bright glance of his mild-beaming eyes, or feel the thrilling clasp of his brave hand ? No, no ! she could not believe it—could not realise it ! She could not look upon or think of him a pale, lifeless corpse, deaf to her voice and dead to her pure warm love ! No ! William could not have forsaken her for ever, and left her behind to mourn and suffer in the world, without his love and presence to cheer and protect her amid the sorrows and evils with which she was surrounded ? No, no ! She could not realise that—could not believe it.

‘O God !’ with passionate earnestness she

prayed in her heart, her lips moving, but without any sound passing from them, while a strange bright glow shone for a moment on her upturned face, 'in Thy almighty power and infinite goodness grant that I may once more see him that my soul loveth, and I shall be content. If Thou wilt Thou canst do this, Lord, I believe. I know, I feel Thou canst. Nevertheless, if Thou will not, Thy will be done !'

'Blanche dear,' said her mother, in a calm, tender, half-solemn voice, looking as if she comprehended something of her thoughts, 'let us try to put our trust in God, and He will not forsake us. He will give us help and strength to bear our trials if we ask Him ; and bring us comfort when we do not expect it, if we submit to His will.'

The words of Mrs. Wyndham, though they were not intended by her to express any hope of either of them ever again seeing William Haverty in this life, were so much in unison with her own thoughts, and seemed so prophetically responsive to her inward prayer, that Blanche felt as if some strange and mysterious influence had fallen upon her heart, and promised her both the comfort of which her mother told her, and the fulfilment

of the wish she had with such deep, silent, impassioned earnestness expressed in the sudden uncontrollable aspiration of a spiritual emotion, rather than the reasonable expectation of mere human nature. For the moment, she felt as if God had indeed and already breathed consolation and peace into her spirit; and even when the first glow of inspiration, as it were, had vanished from her mind, she still seemed conscious of something that calmed the wildness of her sorrow, and soothed the desolation of her heart.

‘Do William’s father and mother know of this?’ inquired Mrs. Wyndham, after a short silence. ‘Poor Mrs. Haverty! What a blow this will be to her! and her husband too! Oh, they will find it very hard to bear!’ she added, with great earnestness and feeling.

‘They do know of it. I have just been to tell them,’ replied Colonel Fielden, gravely.

‘You! Then you knew of it before you went out?’ said Mrs. Wyndham, in surprise which was more than shared with her daughter.

‘Yes, I did. I had just seen it in the paper, and was so stunned and overcome with it that I really did not know what to do, or how to tell you of it. I trembled at

the thought of the agony it would cause to Blanche, and shrank from being the unwelcome medium of such painful intelligence. Scarcely knowing what to do, or how to act, I hastened off to his poor father and mother to break the dreadful news to them, with the intention of preparing your minds for it by degrees when I came back; of course, never for a moment expecting that anyone would call while I was out and tell you of it in the way that those inconsiderate people, the Ingolds, have done—for I understand they have been here, and presume they told you.'

‘That Mrs. Ingram has no more feeling in her, nor Mr. Ingram either, I think, than a toll-bar! And had I knowed that she had so upsetted Miss Blanche as she swept out o’ the hall wi’ her painted cheeks and so much crinoiline that she could hardly get out at the door, or into her own carriage—the more shame to her, an old woman like her, for tryin’ to look like a young girl! It’s quite disgusting, I think! If I had knowed it was her as had upsetted my young missie as she did, I’d have took’d some o’ the paint off her face, an’ perhaps spoiled the look o’ her false hair into the bargain!’ exclaimed Eliza Fleming, all at once starting up and giving

vent to her pent-up feelings of indignation and contempt of the Ingrams—apparently, for the moment, quite regardless of the general and Mrs. Wyndham—to which an anxiety for Blanche had hitherto prevented her from giving utterance ; but now, feeling somewhat relieved by the evident improvement in the tone and spirits of her young mistress, her thoughts were more at liberty to turn to other subjects.

Blanche gave a half-sad, half-amused smile at this sudden and rather lengthy ebullition of her faithful attendant ; Mrs. Wyndham was startled and seemed half displeased at first, and General Fielden appeared both surprised and amused at her voluble fidelity and animated bitterness.

‘ Hush, Mary !—for shame, to talk so in the presence of General Fielden, as well as your mistress !’ said Mrs. Wyndham, reprovingly. ‘ Don’t you know that Mr. and Mrs. Ingram are friends of General Fielden, and that we are in his house, as well as in his presence now ?’

‘ I beg your pardon, ma’am, and General Fielden’s too,’ replied Eliza, meekly ; ‘ I don’t mean to be unrespectful to either you, ma’am, or General Fielden ; only, to think o’ them

people callin' here o' purpose, which I feel sure they did,' she continued, again becoming warmer in her manner, 'an' upsettin' my dear young mistress as they did, and then goin' off without carin' whether they had broked her dear heart or no—which one would think they wanted to do—is enough to make everybody lose both patience and temper wi' them.'

'You are quite right, Eliza, and I fully appreciate and respect your regard for your young mistress,' said General Fielden, interposing, as he saw Mrs. Wyndham beginning to look still more shocked and embarrassed. 'And I am quite as much annoyed and almost as much displeased as you are, at the inconsiderateness of Mr. and Mrs. Ingram. We must, however, be a little charitable. Their conduct, no doubt, was the result of inadvertence rather than design, as probably they did not suspect that the intelligence they brought would have so powerful an effect upon Miss Wyndham, being most likely ignorant of the relation and feelings subsisting between her and William Haverty. But never mind. Don't be uneasy; I am not angry, but like you all the better for the feelings of interest and devotion you have

shown to the person and happiness of your young mistress.'

'Thank you, sir ; but I couldn't help being vexed and aggravated when I knowed what they had done,' said Eliza apologetically, the tears starting to her eyes as she spoke.

'Come, Eliza,' replied Mrs. Wyndham, kindly, 'you mustn't give way to your feelings in this manner. We are not at all offended with you for what you have said, for we know that it's only your regard for my daughter that made you so far forget yourself.'

'Indeed it was, ma'am,' rejoined Eliza, still crying.

'Now, Eliza, there's a good, dear creature ; don't distress me by letting me see you cry,' said Blanche, gently. 'We all appreciate your fidelity and honesty too much to be displeased at anything you say. I assure you we do. There now, don't be uneasy any more. I am better now ; so you can leave me if you like.'

'Thank you, Miss Blanche. I'm sorry I was so silly as to be so upsetted at what I said ; but I couldn't help sayin' it, as well as bein' vexed afterward,' replied Eliza, drying her eyes, and, with a kindly look of respect-

ful affection at Blanche, and a polite curtsey to Mrs. Wyndham and the general.

‘And how did poor Mrs. Haverty and the good old colonel bear the sad news of their son’s death, general?’ inquired Mrs. Wyndham, as Eliza Fleming left the room.

‘Better almost than I could have expected. I broke it to them as cautiously as I could, at first, only saying that I heard a great battle had been fought, in which their son had again greatly distinguished himself, and was reported to be wounded: after which, by degrees, I told them that he had been killed. For some time they were awfully distressed. Mrs. Haverty wrung her hands and wept long and bitterly; and as for the colonel, he was even more violent in his grief than she was. He literally shrieked in the intensity of his sorrow, and cried like a child. It was a melancholy scene, and my heart bled to see them,’ said the brave general, his voice quivering, and his eyes filling with tears at the recital, while Blanche and her mother were even more agitated. ‘For a few minutes,’ he continued, after a short pause, ‘I allowed their grief to have its way, feeling that for me to have offered any consolation, till the first rush of their sorrow had passed,

would have been both useless and ill-timed. I waited till the colonel himself addressed me before I spoke.

““General!” said he, at length stopping before me, laying his hand upon my arm, and scarcely able to speak from the choking agitation of his feelings, “this is a sad and terrible blow to my dear wife and myself! It is hard, very hard, to lose our only boy! But I hope Almighty God will give us strength to bear it! We are old people, and haven’t much to live for now, since our dear boy has been taken from us. He cannot come to us, but we shall go to him—we shall go to him!” he repeated, with a sad shake of his grey head, looking tenderly at his wife, who came forward, and taking his solitary hand in both of hers, pressed it for a few moments in silence, and then said, trembling with emotion :

““No, my dear, he cannot come to us, but we shall go to him ; and, if we go together, God cannot make it too soon !”

““No, not too soon, my dear wife, if we go together! Our dear girls are far from us ; though, thanks be to God, they are happy! But they are far from us, and have their husbands and their children to occupy their

minds and engage their affections ; not that I think they forget us, or have ceased to love their old father and mother. God forbid that I should be so unjust to our own dear affectionate children ! But we are left alone, like a pair of old birds whose young ones have flown away from them, and sought homes for themselves other than their parents', or been shot down by the cruel hand of the destroyer, as he, the last hope, the pride and joy of our hearts has now been, in fighting for the honour of his country ! I hope the Lord did not take him unprepared," he added, with deep solemnity, looking me earnestly in the face.

“Let us hope not,” I replied ; but feeling this was a subject far beyond the province of the human mind to discuss, and much too awful for speculation, I tried to draw their minds away from it, and talked of the honour of their son's having fallen in the performance of his duties, and in such a glorious victory as that in which he had died, and which his valour and talents had so greatly assisted in achieving. But with all the colonel's patriotism, it was difficult to reconcile him to the loss of his son in the service of his country. And with all the

strong religious feelings of both, their faith in God's love, and their submission to His will, it was a long and hard struggle with them to yield in submission to the terrible bereavement that had fallen upon them.'

'Ay, general, however strong our faith in God's goodness and mercy may be, the loss of those we love is a hard trial to us,' said Mrs. Wyndham, with emotion; 'afflicted human nature will show its grief in spite of all other sentiments, however high and holy and powerful they may be.'

'Ay, I know it, Mrs. Wyndham; I know it too well!' he replied, with a sad, grave shake of the head; 'and could all the better appreciate the feelings and sympathise with the sorrows of my dear old friends the Havertys. They seemed a little more composed and resigned when I left them, though still dreadfully cut up, as you may well imagine. But I little expected that I should find you and Blanche already acquainted with the news when I came back, and feel much grieved that I was not within when those Ingrams called, to have prevented them from telling you of it in the careless way they did.'

General Fielden had strong suspicion that

they had called quite as much for the purpose of bringing the news of William Haverty's death as for the sake of seeing either himself or his visitors. He had not forgotten what William had told him respecting the anxiety of Mr. Ingram for James Murray to marry Blanche Wyndham; nor had his own observations since then tended to allay his suspicions upon that point. But, unwilling to increase the affliction of Blanche and the uneasiness of her mother by reviving other painful recollections, he deemed it best to keep his thoughts upon this subject to himself, and hide from them the anxiety he felt lest James Murray should take advantage of this sad event to renew a suit so repellent and obnoxious to both Blanche and her mother.

CHAPTER XV.

ABOUT the same time that General Fielden's coachman left the town of Westdon with the news of the battle and the death of Colonel Haverty, Mr. James Murray was riding down the High Street on his way home from the performance of some magisterial duties at the court-house. He noticed a large crowd of people standing round the window of a newspaper-shop, intently reading a large, roughly-written placard stuck up inside. Now, Mr. Murray had the most ineffable contempt for common people, and of course they must be wretchedly common people who could stand staring on the street into a paltry news-vendor's window—no doubt, he thought, at some absurd illustration in a low, penny journal or newspaper—and had no right to do so, interrupting the traffic of other people,

such as himself, by their idle curiosity and vulgar admiration of some absurd trash or other. And what not a little increased his contempt, and imparted a strongish tinge of anger to it also, was, just as he approached, a couple of large heavy carts drawn by horses and coming in opposite directions, stopped outside the crowd—the drivers of which, standing up and trying to see over the heads of the people—still more interfering with the traffic of the street. Of course, in his eyes as a magistrate, such an interruption was a thing that ought not to be tolerated ; and had his authority extended to where he now was, he would at once have ridden in among them, if he had thought there was no risk to his own person in doing so, and ordered them to disperse. But, to his extreme vexation, he had no power here. His jurisdiction did not extend into the city of Westdon, which was entirely in the hands of its own mayor and magistrates. Still, he was a magistrate, and he should let the ignorant rabble know that he was not to be interrupted by them without telling them who he was.

‘Now, you lazy, stupid clowns !’ cried he, in a harsh tone of coarse pomposity, ‘what do

you mean by stopping your carts in the middle of the street in that way, and blocking up the road, as if there were not enough idle fools standing gaping about and preventing people from passing, but you must add to their number. Get out of the way ! or I shall let you know what it is to stop a county magistrate in this manner.' Saying which, he spurred his grey horse ; and the carters, to whom he was well enough known, and to many of the other people also, as a harsh, tyrannical man, who would use little leniency to anyone if he could find anything like a fair pretext for severity, immediately made their horses move forward ; and he rode on, without even once deigning to cast a look at the object of all their curiosity. If he had, he would have gone away with very different thoughts and feelings.

' These petty tradesmen have no business to be made magistrates, unless they can use their power more effectively than they do. A pretty set of people they are to be entrusted with the authority of magistrates ! ' he muttered contemptuously, as he spurred his horse into a slow kind of heavy trot, and his big, heavy person, looking very much as if it would break the animal in twain and fall to

the ground between the two parts ; while, at the same moment, a loud, derisive laugh rose from the two carters and a few of the outsiders of the crowd, which did not by any means tend to increase the amiability of his temper as he heard it.

Just as he was crossing the old-fashioned bridge which was the boundary between the city and the county, he was overtaken by a gentleman who came galloping along behind him, and hurriedly drew up by his side.

‘ Hulloa, Mr. Ingram ! How d’ you do ? You ride fast,’ said Mr. James Murray, rather more gruffly than usual.

‘ Why, I wanted to overtake you,’ replied Mr. Ingram, whose deep-set, discoloured eyes, thin lips, and sallow complexion seemed under the influence of considerable excitement. ‘ Have you heard the news ? I know you haven’t, from that glum look of yours.’

Mr. Murray’s first feeling was dignified indignation at the impertinent familiarity of this insignificant puppy. But he checked its expression, and merely replied, rather coldly :

‘ What news ? I know of no news likely to interest me so much as you seem to imagine.’

‘Don’t you?’ inquired the other, with an affected laugh. ‘Didn’t you see that crowd of people in the street as you came down?’ he asked, with an exulting look.

‘Why, I couldn’t well help that, as the fools were almost blocking up the road, and I had to order them to make room for me to pass,’ said Mr. Murray, sourly. ‘Are you going my way?’ he asked, seeing that Mr. James Ingram kept riding by his side; and he had his own reasons for not wishing to have anyone with him just then.

‘Yes; as far as the toll-bar, where I shall turn off.’

‘Humph! Very well, then; we can go together,’ gruffly assented Mr. Murray, as they rode on.

‘So you haven’t heard the news, then?’ again remarked his companion.

‘No. To what news do you allude?’

‘Why, that your rival, young Haverty, is dead!’ exclaimed the other, with confident familiarity, quite regardless of the half-displeased look of Mr. Murray, who gave a sudden start as he heard it, his whole countenance undergoing an instantaneous and remarkable change, and his dull, phlegmatic nature seeming all at once, for a few

imoments, to become animated with a new character and energy in his exultant joy at the death of William Haverty.

‘Ah! I thought I should astonish you with my news.’

‘Well, that is a surprise, and—and a——’

‘Pleasure? Of course it is,’ said his companion, smiling, seeing the other pause, and filling up the sentence for him.

‘Humph! Well, between ourselves, James,’ replied Mr. Murray, in a tone of friendly confidence. ‘Between ourselves,’ he repeated, with a look of inward satisfaction, which gave a sort of fiendish, ghoul-like expression to his heavy, animal countenance, ‘I’m glad to hear it. But how came you to know?’

‘Why, it’s in to-day’s *Times*, and stuck up at every news-shop and newspaper-office in the town! My only wonder is that you haven’t seen it. That’s what all those people were looking at round that window in the High Street as you came down.’

‘And, curse them! blocked up the way and surrounded the window so that I could neither see it nor get along,’ said Mr. Murray, coarsely. ‘But are you sure it’s true? What does it say?’ he asked, a shade of

anxiety returning to his face after a short pause.

‘Why, it’s as true as—as anything,’ replied Mr. Ingram, who seemed not quite certain of what incontrovertible, acknowledged truth to compare it with and illustrate it by. ‘I’ve seen it myself; and here it is, in this paper,’ he added, drawing a copy of the *Times* out of his pocket, and showing him the telegraphic despatch announcing the battle, and the death of Colonel Haverty.

‘It’s sure to be him, I suppose?’ remarked Mr. James Murray, after reading the telegram.

‘Sure to be him? Why, of course it is,’ laughed the other, ridiculing the very idea of doubting it. ‘There isn’t another Haverty in the “Army List,” for I have looked; much less two of that name of the same rank and at the same place at the same time; for you know that the fellow has lately, through the favour of somebody, I suppose, been made a colonel,’ said the shallow puppy, trying to be very logical in his reasoning as well as contemptuous in his envy.

‘Humph! Yes, so I’ve heard,’ said Murray, with a dull sneer. ‘However, his

vanity has not enjoyed its gratification very long—curse him !' he added, bitterly, ' for it must be him to whom this paper alludes.'

' Of course it is. So you've nothing to do now but to go in and win. You see, Providence is in your favour after all.'

There was a kind of flippant, half-mocking tone in his voice as he said this, which it would be difficult to say whether it proceeded from irreverence of that Providence whose name he used, or of secret ridicule of the heaven-favoured lover to whom he spoke. Perhaps there was something of both in it, and probably Mr. Murray thought so too ; but he concealed his irritation at the latter, and felt too indifferent about the former to make any remark.

' So,' continued Ingram, ' if you don't turn it to advantage it will be your own fault. I know if I were in your place I should very soon do so,' said the little, strutting monkey, with an air of the highest self-satisfaction and confidence. ' I should precious soon bring the affair to a successful issue.'

' Would you ?'

' Yes, that I would ! And, why if the fellow came back even, after all, I should be

all the better pleased for the sake of seeing his disappointment at being done, though I don't think there's the least earthly chance of that in your case, old boy : so you won't have that satisfaction.'

' Humph ! well, I don't think there is much chance of that. The only thing is, that I have such difficulty in seeing the fickle lady. Either her mother, or that old fellow Fielden, seems to keep her shut up ; so, as I mayn't meet her, or her own capriciousness keeps her out of my way. I wish I knew some lady that is on terms with her, and would take a little trouble in helping to bring us together.'

As Murray said this he looked at his companion as if he thought he might assist him in that way, adding somewhat cautiously :

' By-the-bye, your wife knows her, doesn't she ?'

' Yes, but she's such a silly fool ; I don't know whether I could get her to do anything or not. But I believe they are going into their own house soon, which I understand is quite ready for them ; and then you'll have a better chance of finding an opportunity of seeing Miss Wyndham, and we, perhaps, of assisting you.'

‘Yes, I hear they are going into their new house next month, after which I shall try to find some means of renewing my suit,’ said the big, clownish, middle-aged lover; ‘and I shall count upon you to facilitate my movements, mind.’

‘You may, old fellow, and I’ll stick to you like a brick!’ replied the other, with a flippant familiarity which, under other circumstances, would have made James Murray knock him down, if he dared.

‘Oh, by-the-bye,’ he added, ‘my father and mother have gone to call at Fielden’s, and let them know the news there, which will expedite matters a little for you. Of course, they are not going to appear as if they knew of anything between young Haverty and Miss Wyndham, but intend merely, incidentally as it were, alluding to the report of the battle and his death, as having seen it in the newspapers, or heard it in the town.’

‘It’s very kind of them; and I hope I shall thank them for it, on the sly, over my wedding breakfast before long.’

‘I hope so too. But as I turn off here, I shall say good-bye,’ said young Ingram, holding out his hand as he pulled up his horse.

‘Good-bye,’ replied Mr. Murray, and they parted ; Ingram spurring his horse into a canter, and Murray riding slowly on up the hill, ruminating on what he had just heard, and on the best means of carrying out his long-cherished scheme of marrying Blanche Wyndham, and of securing the property to which that achievement would entitle him.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. JAMES MURRAY's thoughts respecting the accomplishment of his scheme to marry Blanche Wyndham did not prevent him stopping at the house of Bilson, the market-gardener, which was only a short distance from the spot where he parted from James Ingram. Jumping from his saddle, he hastily led his horse through the small open gate, up the broken steps towards the door, where it stood, almost quite concealed from the road by the rough wall and high rank shrubs which grew in the space between. Having fastened the bridle to a staple in the wall, James Murray gave a couple of low knocks with the handle of his riding-whip upon the door, which was immediately opened by the short, square, broad-faced, bold-looking wife of the market-gardener.

‘ Well, old girl, how are you?’ said he, accompanying his inquiry with a heavy kind of chuck under the chin, with his big hand.

‘ Very well, old boy ; how’re yee?’ she replied in a familiar tone, with a pert, half-coquettish smile. ‘ Back again already?’

‘ Yes ; you see I can’t keep away from you,’ returned James Murray, patting her on the cheek. ‘ Where’s Bilson?’

‘ In the garden, I suppose. What d’ye want wi’ him?’ she asked in reply, as if scarcely expecting that the object of his call was to see her husband. ‘ But ain’t yee comin’ in?’ she inquired, after a moment’s pause.

‘ Yes, of course I am,’ said he, giving a glance at the gate leading to the road, which he had closed on entering, and seeing that his horse was all right. ‘ Go on, little double-chin,’ he added, playfully laying his hand upon her neck and pulling her coarse ringlets, as he closed the door and followed her into the house.

‘ Go an’ tell your pa that he’s wanted,’ said the woman, addressing her daughter, who was sitting in the small room she had led her visitor into, who immediately rose to obey her mother’s orders.

‘Well, little romp, how are you?’ said Mr. Murray, patting the round cheeks and playing with the ringlets of the child. ‘Why, you’re your mother’s very picture,’ he added, as she looked up in his face with a familiar, unabashed smile.

‘An’ her father’s too, perhaps,’ returned the mother, with a sly look.

‘Oh, you think she is, do you? Well, there now,’ said he, again addressing the girl, as he put a fourpenny-piece into her hand; ‘there, run away and try if you can find your father in the garden, and tell him I want to see him. You don’t need to run to hurt yourself, but walk properly, in case you fall,’ he added, exchanging a glance of intelligence with her mother; ‘I’m in no hurry for half an hour.’

‘Pa’s ever so far down the garden, an’ I shan’t find him for ever so long,’ replied the child, as she went out in search of him.

‘So much the better,’ said James Murray, quietly, rising and closing the door which she had left partially open; adding, as he took a seat near her mother: ‘So you think she’s like her father, do you?’

‘Yes, doan’t yee?’ she replied, with another sly glance.

‘Well, perhaps she is.’

Nearly half an hour elapsed before Bilson made his appearance in the house. James Murray was sitting alone when he entered.

‘Well, Tom, I’ve got some news for you to-day,’ said Murray, as that worthy entered in his shirt-sleeves, with dirty hands and face, and his slouched hat upon his head.

‘Not any news as I care much about, I daresay,’ replied Bilson.

‘Oh, I’m not so sure of that,’ returned James Murray, who seemed inclined to humour the fellow. ‘Young Haverty is dead?’

‘Eh? yee doan’t mean it, du you?’ exclaimed the other, with a sudden start of satisfaction.

‘Yes, I do. He has been killed in India. I’ve just seen the account of it in one of the London newspapers.’

‘I’m glad to hear it! An’ I hope that —— Irishman o’ his is killed with him?’ cried Bilson, fiercely. ‘Still,’ he added, after a moment’s pause, ‘I doan’t see as how his bein’ killed is to be any good to me.’

‘Don’t you?’

‘Nooa. It won’t get me the hunder pound

I was to have had from the will, will it?' returned the gardener, sourly.

'Well, I'm not so sure of that; and much more too, perhaps.'

'I doan't see it.'

'But I do. You know well enough,' said the pompous magistrate, confidentially explaining himself to the rude, knavish boor, 'that the reason why Miss Wyndham has always refused to fulfil the old engagement to marry me, and to carry out the will of her father, was a kind of silly liking she had for this fellow Haverty. Now, as he is killed, she won't have his impertinent interference to upset her any more, and her mother will no longer, I dare say, hesitate about carrying out the will of her husband, in respect to my marriage with her daughter.'

'Well, I'm no so sure about that.'

'Ah, but I am; and even if she does, we—for I shall require your assistance, perhaps—may find some means of either forcing her to do so, or carry it out without consulting her at all—or her obstinate daughter either, for that matter, if it comes to the push.'

'Well, I doan't see how that could be done anyhow. An' mind, I ain't gooin'

to get myself into any scrape for yee again—an' get nothing for it into the bargain.'

‘I don’t ask you,’ replied Mr. James Murray, in a sharper tone than he had yet used; ‘I don’t ask you to get into any scrape on my account: though if I hadn’t helped you out of some that you got into on your own, I’m afraid you would have been digging the ground in the neighbourhood of Dartmoor prison, under the superintendence of a red-coated sentinel with a bayonet in his hand, before this, instead of your own garden. You may be thankful that you’ve had a better friend among the magistrates than General Fielden, or it would not have been so well for you now.’

‘Well, I know you’ve stood my friend an’ let me off, when the other magistrates wouldn’t ha’ done it,’ said Bilson, in a humbler tone, apparently not altogether relishing this; ‘but what d’ye want me to du now?’

‘I can hardly tell you yet. But whatever it may be, it won’t be anything that’ll involve you in any danger. Only, as I’ve always stood your friend, and will do so still if you are willing to serve me in return, I must have your promise that you’ll be ready to act

when I want you, leaving all responsibilities and consequences that may follow to me. Of course you'll be well paid for your work, if we succeed, of which I have not the least doubt, either one way or another. Do you agree to it ?

‘ Yes ; as yee say there woan’t be any danger in it, I will do my best to assist,’ replied the scoundrel.

‘ Very well, I shall depend upon you. And now I’ll tell you what I think of doing, in case I find Miss Wyndham’s mother persisting in keeping her out of my way to prevent me from speaking to her. They’ll very soon be into their own house—in about a month, I believe—which will take them away from the watching of General Fielden and his people, when I intend trying to find some means of meeting Miss Wyndham, and of inducing her to renew her engagement ; and, if her mother refuses to sanction it, carry her off, and marry her whether she will or not. Of course she might show a little opposition at first, and pretend to be frightened and unwilling to go ; but that we shouldn’t mind. It would soon go off, when she found it was no use. We must not care for anything of that sort.’

‘But yee couldn’t marry her against her will, could yee?’ asked Bilson, who had his own secret fears about taking part in so desperate a scheme, but was afraid to show them.

‘Well, I shouldn’t mind doing that, if it should be necessary. But there’s no fear of it. If we once get her fairly out of her mother’s power, I’m not afraid but she will soon agree to the fulfilment of her long-standing engagement. But I won’t have recourse to anything of this kind except it is really requisite.’

‘Then I shall have the hunder pound an’ the thousand yee promised me, whichever way, if yee succeed?’

‘Yes, if I succeed you shall have both—and more too, perhaps.’

‘Very well; I’ll du whatever yee like, if the devil himself should try to prevent me,’ replied Bilson, firmly.

‘That’s right! Now I can depend on you. I shall see you again soon, and let you know about what I intend doing, and then we can make our arrangements,’ said James Murray, as he cautiously led his horse out to the road, after glancing each way to see that he was not observed; and, throwing himself heavily

across the saddle, rode leisurely on up the hill till he had gone about a hundred yards, when he pushed on and was soon out of sight.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN a few weeks Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter were able to take possession of their newly-built and handsomely-furnished house at Bilford Hall. And when the long-looked-for day at length arrived that they could return to their new home, and leave that of General Fielden, they felt no small degree of reluctance at leaving the house of one whose generous hospitality, courteous attentions, and delicate kindness they had so long enjoyed, making them almost forget—as it was his constant aim they should do—that they were not in their own house. Nor did their warm-hearted, liberal host feel less regret at parting with his visitors, whom he had now begun almost to regard as part of his own household ; and for some days after they had left, felt as if something that

belonged to him--something that had given life and interest to his lonely home--had been taken from him. But his active interest in Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche did not end when they left his house. Not only as executor and trustee, with Mrs. Wyndham, of Mr. Wyndham's will and property, did he continue to assist in the arrangement and managing of their estates ; but as a sincere and trusted friend he was ever ready to advise them in everything relating to their own personal affairs, in which his counsel could be useful to them, and by which they were always ready to be guided.

At the time of Mr. Wyndham's death, a large sum, amounting to several thousand pounds, of money was in the hands of Messrs. Ingram and Day, bankers, as well as a still larger one in the Funds. The latter he had advised Mrs. Wyndham to allow to remain, but the former, recollecting what William Haverty had told him about those gentlemen, he had induced her to withdraw. For though he did not altogether like taking out his own money from their bank, and had allowed it to remain, in spite of a certain kind of vague uneasiness which would occasionally come upon him respecting its safety,

still, without having some ostensible reason to give them for doing so, he delicately shrank from hurting their feelings by taking the money out of their hands, after so many years of friendly intercourse as there had been between him and both Mr. Ingram and Mr. Day, and their families also. But with regard to the money they held belonging to Mrs. Wyndham, it was different. The re-building and re-furnishing of the house, and many other incidental expenses, afforded a good excuse for drawing out nearly the whole of the amount in the bank, without exciting their suspicions that it was for any other reason than that of meeting a necessary and unavoidable expenditure; and he felt he would have incurred a double responsibility in allowing her money to remain in their hands after what he had heard, without using all his influence with Mrs. Wyndham, as well as his own power as trustee, to remove it, which, as we have said, was accordingly done, by degrees and at different times; leaving only a small sum of about a hundred pounds in their hands, to avoid giving offence by closing the account altogether.

Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche felt lonely and sad in their new home. Their sorrow-

ful reminiscences and troubled thoughts were rather increased and deepened by the large elegant rooms and handsome furniture, than either interested or relieved by them.

The warm heart of the bereaved widow and the gentle spirit of the loving daughter were stirred and shaken with emotion, as they thought of the kind, faithful husband and tender father, who would never more occupy his place in the household, or fill the void in their affections and arrangements which had been created by his sudden and untimely death : Mrs. Wyndham, too, felt uneasy about her daughter. The melancholy death of her husband and subsequent trials and anxieties had very sensibly affected her own health, and the thought that she might herself be called away and leave her daughter alone in the world, without the tender and protecting care of a loving husband, hung heavy upon her since the death of William Haverty—to whose return she had looked forward with almost as much anxiety as Blanche herself, and whose loss she felt with scarcely less disappointment. For in him she saw not only one who would love, cherish and protect her daughter, and appreciate her gentle goodness and devoted affections, and

put an end to all her fears lest Mr. James Murray should again attempt to renew his obnoxious attentions to Blanche, or even, by some strange influence, eventually succeed in his attempts respecting her. For somehow or other, especially since the intelligence respecting William Haverty had reached her, she had felt a vague kind of painful presentiment of approaching unhappiness upon this subject, growing stronger and stronger in her mind till it had almost assumed the form of a positive certainty. She could not tell how it was, or from whence it came, but several times of late the thought that James Murray might, by some means or other, eventually succeed in securing her daughter's hand, had presented itself to her mind with a force and distinctness which had given a chill to her whole frame. For her quick woman's instincts had from the first seen that the cold, selfish meanness of that gentleman, as well as the disparity of their ages and difference of their habits, thoughts and feelings, would never make him either a good or a true husband to her daughter; and her warm, mother's heart shrank from the mere possibility of Blanche becoming the wife of a man so utterly unfit for and unworthy of

her. She knew that General Fielden, and Colonel and Mrs. Haverty also, would protect and cherish her as their own child ; but they were all old people whose death must in the course of a few years remove them from their trust, and leave her exposed to the machinations and injustice of evil and designing men, who might not only plunder her of her property, but destroy her happiness, and either send her to an early grave, or leave her to a life of prolonged misery and wretchedness.

The bare possibility of such a prospect as this for a beloved child might well make a mother's heart sad, and her thoughts uneasy, as it did Mrs. Wyndham's, who, with all her belief in the over-ruling power of a kind and wise Providence, her reliance on His merciful protection for herself and Blanche, could not altogether divest herself of her strong natural feelings of fear and anxiety on account of the inauspicious prospects of her child.

Blanche Wyndham saw with much uneasiness the gradually increasing sadness of her mother, and, guessing something of its cause, did all in her power to cheer and dispel it, concealing, as far as she was able, her own

deep and ineffaceable sorrows, that she might be the better able to lessen those of her beloved parent; and probably the effort necessary to do this was beneficial to her, not only as a mental discipline, but, by increasing her care for her poor mother serving, in some measure to divert her thoughts from the contemplation of her own grief. Poor Blanche! it was only when she was alone, with no human eye upon her, or human ear within hearing of her, that she ever gave vent to the deep emotions of her afflicted heart. For some time after she received the news of William Haverty's death, her whole nature had felt crushed and broken with a desolation and grief that would not, could not be comforted. But gradually the stupefying effects of the terrible blow had become less perceptible in her general appearance, and, though there was a shadow upon her own bright face which could never more altogether disappear, and something almost plaintive in the soft tone of her once gay, and still rich, musical voice, a repining word or an impatient look was never either heard to escape her lips or seen in her countenance —still more interesting from the subdued air of resigned suffering and patient sorrow which

softened rather than saddened it. Lost to her in this world though she felt William to be, Blanche Wyndham derived a sustaining power from the thought—yea, the firm belief, that they should yet meet and be united for ever in another and a better world, where they should have neither sorrow nor pain, nor suffering of any kind to annoy them, and where they should never more be parted, but enjoy the unclouded happiness of each other's society for ever; and she felt, too, now that the thought, the hope, of never again meeting him in the body had completely died within her, as if his spirit was always near her, always beside her, soothing, sustaining, and cheering her, shedding an atmosphere of light and love around her, and giving repose, peace, and rest to her sorrowing heart, and inspiring her with a quiet, gentle cheerfulness in the performance of her every-day duties, not only to her mother, but to herself and others.

As soon as they had got settled in their home, most of their neighbours and old friends called to congratulate them on the event. There was much kindness and sympathy shown to both Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche, especially to the latter, whose re-

cent trial and disappointment was generally known in the neighbourhood.

Colonel and Mrs. Haverty, as may be supposed, were often there. The community of grief between them and the Wyndhams had called forth a reciprocity of sympathy and affection which daily sought for solace and consolation in each other's society. The poor old colonel and his kind-hearted wife felt that peculiar kind of regard for Blanche which people feel for the living representative of some lost but beloved object, in addition to their love for herself. They seemed to see in her, as it were, a part of their own son, and to feel for her as for something that belonged to him and to themselves. While she regarded them with similar feelings in reference to William, it seemed that his death had only all the more closely drawn her to his father and mother. She had all the deep love, reverence, and sympathy for them that she would have had if they had been her own parents, and was linked to them by the holy ties of mutual sorrow, undying recollections of him in whom all their love and devotion met in full sympathy, and in hopeful anticipation of meeting them and him in a future and happier state of existence.

Amongst the other callers upon Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter after their return to Bilford Hall was Mrs. James Ingram. During their stay with General Fielden their intercourse with almost all their neighbours had been very slight, their trials and troubles giving them little relish or disposition for much society, except with only a very few of their oldest and best-known friends.

Mrs. James Ingram, whose quiet manner, gentleness, and amiability of disposition, as well as a strong suspicion that these qualities and her many other virtues were not so well appreciated by her shallow, selfish little husband as they deserved to be, not only made her a favourite with Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche, but drew forth their warm sympathies for her slighted goodness, and their sincere admiration at the uncomplaining meekness and patience with which she bore her unenviable lot. Although, except to the Havertys, and occasionally to their generous old friend General Fielden, and one or two others of their more intimate friends, Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter had little intercourse with their neighbours, they generally exchanged visits with Mrs. James

Ingram about every week or ten days. Mrs. Wyndham was the more willing to do this, from the somewhat similarity of tastes and disposition of that lady and her daughter, and the interest and amusement afforded to the latter by their intercourse. Both were exceedingly fond of music, and could play and sing with considerable skill and sweetness ; and this formed not only a stronger bond of attachment between them, but served to soothe and divert the mind of Blanche from her own sad thoughts.

Mr. James Ingram, though he did not often see Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche himself, knew of, and was well pleased at, the increasing intimacy between them and his wife, chiefly because he hoped to turn it to account in forwarding the suit of his friend James Murray. But he found this more difficult than he had at first anticipated it would be ; for not only had his wife, with all her gentleness of nature, and yielding to him in every other respect, positively refused to be a party to any scheme to bring James Murray—for whom she had that instinctive aversion and dislike which the good and pure always have for the base and bad—and Blanche Wyndham together, but objected to

ask that gentleman to the house when she thought the Wyndhams were likely to be there, when she found the strong dislike they entertained for him, and the utter horror that Blanche had of his presence.

‘No, dear,’ said she to her husband one morning at breakfast, when he proposed bringing Mr. Murray back with him from the town, in the afternoon, if he should meet him, which he knew he should, when his wife had told him that she expected Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche in the evening to have some music with her. ‘No, dear, don’t do it. I know they have the strongest possible aversion to him ; and with Blanche it amounts to absolute horror. I do believe his appearance in the room would have the effect of sending her into a fit. I never knew anyone have so utter a dislike to a man as she has to James Murray. I don’t believe that anything on earth would induce her to marry him, or even to speak to him. Therefore don’t attempt to bring them together, at all events, in our own house. It would be sure to offend them, and do him no good. And I should be so sorry to hurt their feelings, and lose their friendship into the bargain.’

‘Why, what a deuced long speech you

make about nothing !' said her husband, looking up from his nice hot coffee, toast, and cold fowl, with a half-contemptuous expression on his sallow countenance.

' Well, my dear, I only tell you what I am sure is the truth.'

' Stuff ! Do you think I'm such a fool as to believe that any woman has such sentimentality about her as you talk of ? If she has, the sooner such stupid nonsense is driven out of her head the better.'

' It is not stupid nonsense at all, dear. You know, as well as I do, that Blanche Wyndham is perfectly unfitted for being the wife of James Murray ; and I know she has an absolute aversion to him, so don't attempt to do anything to bring about what I know will never take place,' urged the wife, gently.

' What absurd nonsense you talk !' said Mr. James Ingram, impatiently. ' How do you know what will or will not take place ? If Blanche Wyndham's father had still been alive, she would have been compelled to marry James Murray before this, whether she had liked it or not. You ought to know that well enough, at all events, as you seem to know so much about her.'

' I know quite well, dear,' replied the wife,

with meek gentleness, ‘that it was Mr. Wyndham’s wish at one time, and in accordance with that wish Blanche had even consented to marry Mr. Murray, in spite of her dislike to him ; but it is well known that Mr. Wyndham expressed the greatest aversion to the match himself, and broke the engagement entirely off just before his death.’

‘Yes, when he didn’t know what he either said or did.’

‘Both the doctors, Mr. Anstruther, Colonel Haverty, and General Fielden, are not only aware of what he said, but could prove, if it were necessary, the perfect clearness and consciousness Mr. Wyndham had up to the very moment of his death.’

‘Ay, very likely they would say so ! Of course Haverty would, for the sake of his upstart son. But hasn’t Mr. Wyndham’s will been found ? and doesn’t it show what his wishes were before he died ?’ asked James Ingram, with a triumphant sneer thinking that this must both convince and silence his wife.

‘Yes, at the time the will was made. But you know, dear, it was Mr. Murray’s selfish and cowardly conduct when the house was burned down, and Mr. Wyndham and

Blanche were so nearly burnt to death with it—as they must have been, if Captain Haverty hadn't risked his own life to save theirs. James Murray might have so easily assisted them to escape, before the fire got so bad, but never made the least exertion to do so. That completely opened Mr. Wyndham's eyes, and convinced him of Mr. Murray's meanness and worthlessness of being Blanche's husband, and made him break off the engagement.'

'It's all very well for you to say so, but I don't believe a word of it. It was merely got up by the Havertys and their friends, in favour of the pretensions of that fellow, the captain, as he was called,' returned the husband contemptuously.

'Well, it could be no benefit to him now, at all events, since he is dead, poor fellow!' said Mrs. James Ingram, quietly.

'And a good job too, the humbug! I always hated him; and as for Blanche Wyndham, she ought to be forced to comply with her father's will, and carry out her own engagement with James Murray. Women have no business to be allowed to indulge in their own silly fancies in such a way. And I hate to be argued with, and listen to such

long speeches from people,' he muttered, rising from the breakfast-table as he spoke.

'Well, dear, don't be angry,' said his wife, rising too, and looking into his face with all the tender affection of a gentle true-hearted wife. 'I didn't argue with you out of any desire to oppose you—do not think so unkindly of me as that!—only because I should be so sorry to hurt the feelings of Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche by bringing them in contact with Mr. Murray, as well as to expose ourselves to the suspicion of having planned the meeting between them; and I feel quite sure it would be no satisfaction to Mr. Murray himself, any more than it would be to us.'

'I believe it's only her stupid mother and the old muff Fielden that tries to prevent Blanche marrying Murray. Now, when young Haverty is dead, I don't believe she would make any objection to it, if left to decide for herself,' returned Mr. James Ingram, upon whom the tender loving glances of his gentle wife seemed to have no more effect in awakening reciprocal tenderness than if his heart had been a piece of tanned leather. 'Besides, it's of the greatest importance to—to James Murray that she

should marry him,' he added with strong emphasis and some slight hesitation. 'But I haven't time to waste here. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye, dear,' replied his wife, with a half-disappointed, half-wistful look, which he seemed to understand, for he bent slightly forward, and coldly put his thin retreating lips to her forehead for an instant; and then leaving the room he mounted his horse, which stood ready at the door for him, and rode carelessly away.

Poor Mrs. Ingram's heart felt chilled and depressed for a few moments at the cold indifference of her husband; but she was too much used to it to leave any extraordinary effect upon her spirits. She had a hearty cry for a few minutes—how could she do otherwise than cry?—and then she felt relieved, and went upstairs to her nursery to console herself with the innocent prattle and love of her two dear little children; for her husband would never allow them to make their appearance downstairs in the morning till after he had gone out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VEXED and disappointed at finding his wife so obstinately—as he chose to consider it—opposed to his wishes of assisting James Murray in securing Blanche Wyndham, Mr. James Ingram resolved to punish her by not coming home in the evening to dinner—for he was a fashionable man, and did not dine till six o'clock—and stayed out till near midnight. He dined at his club—for there was a club in Westdon, and James Ingram of course belonged to it—where he remained playing billiards, talking about horses and feats of horsemanship, and drinking wine with some others of the same stamp as himself, and boasting of their conquests among the fair sex. For although several others present were married men, as well as Mr. Ingram, they did not deem it at all derogatory to

either their manhood or their character to make a boast of their flirtations and triumphs over the hearts of other ladies, as well as their wives. After which, between eight and nine o'clock in the evening, he carelessly strutted out of the club, strolled listlessly down the street—having sent back his horse in the afternoon with the man who brought it for him—crossed the bridge, and proceeded leisurely along the straggling street on the opposite side of the river, as if with the intention of walking home; but instead of taking the footpath across the fields, which was generally taken by people going towards Bilford from Westdon, he left the main road till he came to the house of Bilson, the market gardener, where he suddenly vanished, and did not make his appearance again upon the road till fully two hours after, when it was quite dark; and, as we have already stated, did not reach his own home till near midnight.

Though baffled in his desire to induce his wife to assist him in forwarding the suit of James Murray, Mr. Ingram did not by any means give up the idea of turning the intercourse between him and Blanche Wyndham, and the frequent visits of the latter to his

house, to the advantage of his friend, by giving him an opportunity, sooner or later, of meeting her there, even without consulting his wife on the subject, if she still persisted in her opposition ; and was resolved to do so the very first time he knew that Blanche Wyndham was likely to be there in the evening, and he could give intimation of it in time to Mr. Murray. He was the more anxious to lose no time in this, for two reasons : one was, the bank was very much in want of funds, and the ten thousand pounds which it was known James Murray could claim the moment Blanche Wyndham became his wife, might serve to stave off for a little while longer the catastrophe rapidly coming upon it ; while the reversionary interest he would then have in the Bilford Hall estate might also be turned to some advantage, by compelling him either to mortgage it to the proprietors of the bank for sums already owing to them by him, and for advances which he would still require—in which case they, of course, counted upon his wife being a party to the transaction, or of inducing her to dispose of it to them altogether.

The second reason was, that a vague kind of rumour had lately reached Westdon, that

Colonel Haverty had not been killed, as was at first stated, but only severly wounded, and was still living. This report, though no one seemed to know whence or how it came, and was only very partially known, and but little relied upon by those who had heard it, was sufficient to put both James Murray on the alert and to excite the uneasiness of Messrs. Ingram and Day, in case William Haverty should return and again put a stop to the whole scheme of their client's marriage, as well as their own relief and benefit to be derived from that event. They were therefore anxious to bring it, if possible, to a successful issue before Mrs. Wyndham and her daughter had any reason to think Colonel Haverty was still alive, hoping to find some means of either allaying or counteracting the effect of the rumour they had already heard, should it become more generally known, by spreading a contrary one themselves, confirming the original statement of his death.

Knowing the feeling of his father, and the necessity of promptitude both for the sake of the bank and for the success of the scheme, as well as from a secret desire of opposing and disappointing William Haverty, should he really be alive, and ever return in the

hope of marrying Blanche Wyndham, James Ingram was by no means deficient in willingness to assist Mr. Murray in almost any plan for the attainment of his object. Nor did he wait long for an opportunity. One afternoon when he returned home, he found Blanche and Mrs. Wyndham leaving the house as he approached the door. He had just entered the gate which shut the house and garden off from the road, when he heard them approaching upon the gravel walk, though they were still concealed by a slight bend in the path, and some high, leafy laurels and other shrubs which grew on the lawn, between them and him. Impelled by a sudden thought, he jumped behind a thick cluster of the shrubs, and stood perfectly concealed while they walked past. His wife was with them, and as they parted at the gate, he heard Blanche promise to come on the afternoon of that day week, and have a few hours' practice with his wife in their music, and stay till late in the evening, when her maid, Eliza Fleming, should come for her, as her mother most probably would not be with her, being afraid of going out in the night air.

Without altogether knowing why, the

latter part of this intelligence gave great satisfaction to Mr. James Ingram. It scarcely occurred to him that Murray would be able to turn this part of the arrangement to any advantage for himself. Still, the thought that Blanche would have to walk between his house and her own—a distance of nearly half a mile, in the dusk of the evening, with no other companion or protector than a female servant, unless he went with her himself, which he was not disposed to do, or which she probably might not think necessary—gave a vague kind of satisfaction to his mind, which, as he coupled it with his intention of informing James Murray of it, and, unknown to his wife, asking him to make, as it were, an incidental call that same evening, when his wife could not, he thought, out of courtesy to a friend of her husband and his family—for he knew well enough she had no great respect for Mr. Murray—refuse to introduce him into the company of Blanche Wyndham, which would be, at least, one step towards the attainment of the end and object he had in view.

Remaining in his ambuscade till Mrs. Wyndham and Blanche had parted from his wife at the gate, and the latter had returned

to the house, allowing a few minutes to elapse before he showed himself, to avoid suspicion of having been so near, Mr. James Ingram stepped from behind the shrubs, and with an air of easy indifference entered the house, without making any allusion to his wife of having either seen or heard her visitors, not even when she told him they had just gone.

Next day he saw Mr. James Murray, who called at the bank, as he almost invariably did when in the town, and informed him of the circumstance, and told him the plan he had arranged, in his own mind, for his meeting Blanche Wyndham. Murray was, of course, greatly pleased to hear it; and, like a sinking man desperately clinging to anything that comes within his reach for support, eagerly agreed to the scheme proposed by his friend.

Incapable of entertaining feelings of respect for any woman, utterly void of every sentiment of delicacy or gentlemanly courtesy, and too intent on his object to see the folly of his pursuit, Mr. Murray neither thought of the contemptible meanness of his conduct, in sneakingly intruding upon Mrs. Ingram, and trying to force himself into the society

of Blanche Wyndham, after her often-expressed and well-known aversion to him, nor of the little success he was likely to derive from such cowardly and unmanly behaviour. It was, therefore, agreed between him and James Ingram that the latter should go direct home from the bank, soon after three o'clock, and that Murray should call about an hour afterwards and ask to see him upon some very important matter of business, which should detain him till near the dinner-hour, when Mr. Ingram was to request him to stay and dine with him and his wife, as if not knowing anything of Blanche Wyndham's being there. Mr. James Ingram seldom saw his wife after he went home till he met her at the dinner-table, except by chance, as he rarely went into the drawing-room, where she was likely to be, especially if she was practising music, or had anyone with her, generally going either to his own dressing-room, or a small sitting-room kept entirely for himself, where he usually sat till dinner was announced. And it was arranged when Mr. James Murray called he should be shown into this room, where Mr. Ingram was to be ready to receive him, and then, without giving any previous notice to his wife, ask

him to walk into the dining-room, after she and Blanche had taken their seats, when it was hoped that the hospitality of the one, and the good-breeding of the other, would prevent them from showing anything like either surprise or annoyance at his presence.

When the day arrived for putting this silly scheme into execution, Mr. James Ingram went home, and listened for a moment outside the drawing-room door. He did not enter the room, but remained listening to a charming song Blanche Wyndham began singing, which she executed with great delicacy and pathos.

‘UNDER THE GREEN OAK TREE.

‘I love in the whispering grass to lie
Beneath the green oak tree,
Through which the lusty sun I spy
Just peeping through on me.

 While cuckoo cries “Cuckoo,”
 While cuckoo cries “Cuckoo,”
And morning, noon and even pass
Beneath the green oak tree.

‘And when my days have pass’d away
Beneath the green oak tree,
May the same turf on which I lay
Lie peacefully on me.
 While cuckoo cries “Cuckoo,”
 While cuckoo cries “Cuckoo,”
And morning, noon and even pass
Beneath the green oak tree.’

The moment the song ended he left, saying in a cynical tone :

‘You will sing to a different tune before long,’ and with a half-gratified smile heard the voices of his wife and Blanche Wyndham chatting in friendly, unsuspicuous cheerfulness, and then passed on and took his seat, with apparent composure and indifference, in his little room, waiting the expected arrival of his friend with much secret anxiety and impatience. But to his great surprise and annoyance he never came : and when dinner was announced, and he strutted into the dining-room, he could have almost stamped his foot with rage and disappointment at finding James Murray was not there.

‘Curse him !’ he muttered between his clenched teeth ; ‘after he knows she was to be here, and everything arranged between us for my introducing him without exciting either her or my wife’s suspicion of our plan. It’s devilishly provoking !’

However, Mr. Ingram’s vexation and ill-humour did not attract any particular notice during dinner from either his wife or her friend. They were too common with him either to create any great uneasiness or excite any special attention ; and he was too con-

sequentially selfish in his nature to be much company for ladies at any time ; so, beyond a few weak commonplace and silly insipidities which were intended by him as conversation and courtesies, no one who knew anything of him ever expected more.

Blanche Wyndham felt a relief when the dinner ended, and she and Mrs. Ingram could retire to their music in the drawing-room, and leave the shallow little puppy to his wine, cigars, and a sleep in the dining-room. She had too much real sympathy and regard for his gentle, amiable wife to show anything like either aversion or disrespect to Mr. Ingram, but she inwardly felt both in a very strong degree, and it was always with a kind of lightened spirit, when she was at his house, that she and his uncomplaining wife left his presence to enjoy themselves alone in the drawing-room, with their pleasant chat or music, or among the flowers in the garden, undisturbed by his unsympathising selfishness and listless inanities.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. JAMES INGRAM was so much annoyed at Mr. Murray's not coming, that, instead of going to sleep, as he generally did after his wine and cigar when he dined at home, shortly after his wife and her friend went into the drawing-room, he got up, put on a brown wide-awake hat in the hall, which did not by any means improve the colour of his sallow complexion, and went out, desiring the servant, who came to clear off the remains of the dessert, to tell her mistress that she need not wait tea for him, as he had an engagement in the town, and should not be home again till late ; after which he took his way by the footpath across the fields toward Westdon till he came to the back of the garden belonging to Bilson, on approaching which he saw that worthy, followed by his

dog, come out at an old, seldom-used door, and, after closing it cautiously, make his way, in the gathering dusk of the evening, behind a high thick hedge towards the height which looked down upon Bilford, evidently anxious that his movements should escape observation. Bilson had a large, slouched, low-crowned hat upon his head, a loose cape over him, and a short, thick stick in his hand, which altogether gave him a very suspicious appearance.

Mr. James Ingram knew the doubtful character of the fellow too well to be either surprised or to think much of this ; and after quietly watching him till he disappeared over the brow of the hill, went up to the door in the cob-wall he had seen him come out of, laid his hand upon the rusty latch, and, finding the door was not locked or fastened in any way, opened it and walked in. Just as he did so a few large drops of rain fell rattling on the leaves of the fruit trees around him, and by the time he was able to reach the house, and, entering by a back door, find shelter within, a heavy shower was pouring down from a dark cloud above him.

Blanche Wyndham had just gone upstairs to put on her bonnet to go home when the

rain began to fall. Mrs. Ingram and she remained chatting together in the dim light till it was almost dark, in hopes of the shower passing off, which it at length did, but not until the last faint streak of expiring day had been swallowed up and hidden by the thick gloom of a dark night.

‘How unfortunate, dear Blanche, that my husband had to go out, and isn’t here to go home with you?’ said Mrs. Ingram, earnestly, as they descended the stairs, and Blanche stood for a few moments in the hall, while she and Eliza Fleming assisted her to gather up her skirts and wrap herself in a large shawl in case of another shower coming on before she reached home. ‘I do hope you’ll get home safely, and shall be so sorry if you get wet and catch cold.’

‘Oh, don’t be at all uneasy, dear,’ replied Blanche, cheerfully. ‘With these water-proof goloshes on my feet, this thick shawl over me, and Eliza Fleming with me, I am neither afraid of the rain nor the darkness. So, good-bye, dear,’ she added, embracing Mrs. Ingram, who affectionately returned it; and, followed by her faithful maid, and preceded by a servant, as far as the heavy wooden gate, who opened it to let her out,

away went Blanche Wyndham, with Eliza close beside her, along the narrow lane toward Bilford Hall.

Although the night was cloudy, a few stars were visible, and, now that their eyes had become used to the darkness, they had no difficulty in seeing a short distance before them, and could have observed any approaching object or person twenty or thirty yards off, except where the thick high hedges and overhanging trees threw a darker shade than usual upon the road.

After they had gone over nearly half of the distance, just where there was a sharp bend in the road, the trees and hedges were thickest and darkest, a dog suddenly sprang out from the side of the hedge and seized Blanche by the skirts, followed by a man in slouching hat and a loose cape, who stood swearing at her, with a thick stick in his hand, evidently with the object of frightening rather than the intention of really hurting her.

With a loud scream, Eliza Fleming flew upon the dog and kicked it until it let go her young mistress, and, with an angry growl, caught hold of her own ankle, which made her scream still more loudly, while the

man merely turned to her with a fierce imprecation, gave his dog a kick which caused it to give up its hold, and told her if she didn't cease her noise he would make the dog tear her tongue out of her mouth, and then continued his violent gesticulations and oaths before Blanche, who, as may easily be imagined, was both startled and alarmed by this sudden and unexpected attack.

At this moment another man made his appearance from behind, who sprang forward, apparently knocked the first one down, and in a suppressed voice hurriedly said, as he gently but firmly took hold of Blanche and tried to draw her toward a small gate leading into one of the fields, inside of which, and of course unknown to her, stood a close carriage and a pair of horses, ready to dash off the moment she had entered it.

'Come along, madam. Let us get out of the way as quickly as we can, in case there should be more than one. There's sure to be a gang of the villains. Be quick, if you please.'

Although the speaker appeared to be a gentleman in his manner, and his voice was both suppressed and courteous, there was something in its tone which gave a peculiar

chill, and a sensation of fear, to Blanche Wyndham, which not even the ferocious conduct and savage oaths of the first ruffian had done.

For a moment she was so much overcome that she half unconsciously allowed herself to be led close to the gate before she showed any resistance to proceed. At the same time the first man, as if recovering from his fall, jumped up and seized Eliza Fleming, and tried to drag her away in the opposite direction, uttering a volley of oaths at the second comer for having come between him and the other lady. But Eliza's struggles and cries compelled him very speedily to desist, and he stood merely holding her back, as if to prevent her getting off with her mistress, but in reality to keep her from offering any assistance to her against the design of his accomplice ; while his dog kept running round her and snapping at her heels and shaking at her skirts, as if it would fain have again fastened on her, but knew it was not to do so.

‘Let me go ! Help ! help !’ shrieked Eliza Fleming at the top of her voice, which rang far through the valley in the dark, silent night. ‘Help ! help ! robbers !’ she suddenly shouted. ‘My young mistress is

going to be murdered ! Oh, don't let that man drag you away ! He wants to kill you,' she cried, calling to her mistress.

'Hush, you fool !' said the one with the suppressed voice, who was a big, powerful man. 'Don't you see I'm trying to get your—the lady away before that fellow's accomplices, that your bellowing will have here directly upon us ? Be still,' he added in an assuring tone, 'for a few minutes, till I have got your—this lady out of danger, and I will come back to your relief immediately. Come on, madam, if you please. There's no time to lose,' he said in a low tone, addressing Blanche.

'Where do you want to take me ?' she inquired, laying her hand upon the gate, which he had already partially opened, refusing to go through it.

'Only out of reach of that fellow and his accomplices.'

'Don't believe him, miss ! They're both together. I know who they be. They want to abscond you,' cried Eliza Fleming with eager earnestness.

'Curse that fellow ! Why don't he stop that fool's noise,' muttered the second fellow between his clenched teeth ; 'she'll be sure

to bring more upon us directly,' he added aloud. 'Do be quick and come on, madam, or—or I cannot assure you of my protection,' at the same time renewing his efforts to get Blanche to pass the gate.

'No! don't go, Miss Blanche! It's that Murray! Oh help! help! It's Murray! it's Murray!' yelled Eliza in a perfect agony of fear and rage.

'Curse yee for a shriekin' devil! Take that for your noise,' said the ruffian, who had been holding her back, raising his stick to strike her over the head, while at the same moment his dog bounded forward with a fierce growl to seize a man who, under shadow of the dark hedge, had approached within half a dozen yards without being observed, but the next moment was rolling and howling upon the ground as if it had been shot, and before its master's stick could reach Eliza's head, the ruffian had himself received a blow which laid him prostrate upon the road beside his dog; and the man, whipping the stick out of his hand, was standing over him, ready to strike him to the earth again if he moved.

A loud, shrill scream of terror burst from Blanche Wyndham, as she heard the words of her alarmed attendant. In an instant she

recognised in the suppressed tones of her pretended protector the voice of the detested James Murray, and with a desperate energy struggled to free herself from his powerful grasp. But to no purpose, for now, seeing that further concealment was useless, and a moment's delay might be dangerous, he seized her in his arms, regardless alike of her struggles and screams, and had already forced her through the gate, when at the same moment that his accomplice—who doubtless the reader has already recognised as Bilson, the market-gardener—was struck to the ground, a hand was laid upon his throat, which held him like a vice, as if the strength of an enraged lion had been put forth on it, and a voice deep, furious, and agitated, rung in his ears, and made the big, cowardly scoundrel shrink and quake like a calf in the terrible grasp of a tiger; for the recognised voice of Blanche Wyndham had inspired superhuman power and energy, as well as superhuman wrath into that hand.

‘Hold, villain, and unhand that lady!’ cried the new-comer, trembling with emotion as well as rage. ‘Unhand her, I say, or by the God of heaven, in another moment you die the death of a hound, which you have long merited!’

The stranger only used one hand—his right, his left being apparently concealed under the fold of a military cloak, which hung upon his shoulders. But there was a terrible power exerted in that one hand and that one arm, which seemed to be the concentration of the strength of more than two ordinary ones, as he still more firmly increased the force of his grasp upon Murray's throat, and shook him in the energy of his wrath.

In an instant, as if paralysed, Murray released his hold of his intended victim, and, beneath a sudden blow from that same right hand, fell down at his assailant's feet ; for that voice had appalled him even more than the iron grasp upon his throat. For the moment he felt as if the outraged ghost of William Haverty had come to rescue Blanche Wyndham from his power ; and his heart became like lead within him, and crushed him to the earth with horrible dismay ; which was scarcely relieved when the terrible clasp of the hand, which seemed more like that of an enraged demon than of a mere human being, closed upon his throat.

With a wild shriek of mingled surprise, fear, doubt, joy, Blanche would have fallen to the ground but for the instantaneous sup-

port of her preserver, who caught her in his arm—for he had only one—just as she fell back in a swoon.

‘Haste, Patrick ; strike one of your wax tapers. It will burn here in the shelter while you wet a handkerchief and put it to her face. Never mind that ruffian. If he attempts to move I'll send a bullet through his vile body !’ cried Colonel Haverty, as he placed Blanche gently down on the drier ground close under the hedge, where the rain had been pretty well kept from it by the trees overhead ; while Eliza Fleming—who had been equally startled by this unexpected rescue from the ruffians and appalled by the sudden appearance of two persons, one of whom was reported to be dead, and the other generally supposed to be so -- having now somewhat recovered the use of her limbs and senses, hastened forward at the same time to the assistance of her fainting young mistress.

In a moment Patrick O'Brien had lighted a wax match, and placed it and a tin box, containing some more, in the hand of his master, who, by shading it a little from the air, kept it burning for a short time, and, continuing to strike another as one began to go out, maintained sufficient light for several

minutes to enable Eliza Fleming to attend to her insensible mistress, and bathe her face and forehead with the wet handkerchiefs Patrick O'Brien kept supplying her with by dipping them in a small pool of tolerably clean water, which the match-light had shown him close by.

At first Eliza approached the stooping figure of William Haverty with something like awe, but it speedily passed off. Anxiety for her beloved mistress quickly dispelled every other feeling from her mind, and her whole heart was absorbed in the one thought of her safety and relief.

During the time these efforts were being made for the restoration of Blanche Wyndham the two rascals, who had been so wonderfully interrupted and baffled in their infamous scheme of abduction, took advantage of the occupied attention of William Haverty and his servant, and, under the shelter of the darkness, crawled along the ground till they were fairly out of sight, and then, in opposite directions, took to their heels; when, in a few minutes, to the surprise of both William Haverty and Patrick, as well as of Eliza Fleming, a carriage was heard driving rapidly away from the other side of the hedge, across

a level field ; the object of its being there they were at no loss of at once comprehending.

Blanche Wyndham soon began to recover her consciousness ; and as the awe of her surprise at seeing him she had so long mourned as dead so suddenly and unexpectedly brought before her, and at a moment too which gave it still more the appearance of a supernatural occurrence, gradually wore off, and the well-known voice of William Haverty assured her that it was indeed himself who was beside her, and who had so providentially rescued her from the outrage and insult of the ruffianly Murray and his brutal accomplice, coming back, as it were, from the very dead to do so, and so claim her for his own. - Who can tell the thrilling, delicious gush of joy and happiness that swelled in her pure, loving heart, or her deep feeling of gratitude to Almighty God for that joy and happiness ?

Few words were then spoken. The hearts of both were too full of a delicious yet half-painful agitation to be able to give utterance to their emotions. But the few words that were spoken, filled each with an overflowing ecstasy of bliss, which no other mortal words

could have given, and which no other mortal hand should henceforth interrupt or take from them.

As soon as Blanche Wyndham was able to walk, leaning upon the arm of her happy preserver, she got up and was led by him toward her home. Oh, what happiness to have that arm to rest upon, and that companion to protect her alike from present danger and future anxiety ! The inexpressible felicity of that moment was more than a recompense to her for all the past griefs and sufferings of her life : and an inspiring guarantee of joy and peace for the future ! For she felt that henceforth she should never again be separated from him, who was now beside her, and that he should never more leave his home, except with her as his companion and happy wife.

CHAPTER XX.

‘OCH ! bad luck to it ! If both the prisoners haven’t escaped ; the villians !’ exclaimed Patrick O’Brien, turning round and, in vain, trying to find or see Bilson, not knowing that he had gone off as well as Murray. ‘By dad, if we haven’t lost half the honour o’ the victory, in lettin’ the prisoners get off.’

‘Oh, never mind, Patrick, I have one result of it here which makes the escape of the scoundrels of little importance,’ said his master, whose heart glowed with too much happiness to take much heed of either Murray’s or Bilson’s escape, giving a quiet gentle squeeze to the soft hand he held in his as he spoke, which sent the blood tingling through the gentle frame leaning upon his arm, as he led her away from the spot, followed by Patrick O’Brien and Eliza Fleming.

Mrs. Wyndham, who had become exceedingly uneasy about her daughter, was not a little startled and alarmed as Blanche and her attendant entered the house—for she ran into the hall the instant she heard the door open—accompanied by two male figures ; for, in the dim light of the hall-lamp, and the concentration of her thoughts and attention on her daughter, she did not at first recognise who they were.

‘ Oh, my child ! ’ she exclaimed in terror as she saw the soiled state of her dress. ‘ What has been the matter ? Have you been knocked down in the road ? And how flushed and agitated you are ! Oh God, my child has been hurt ! Tell me, dearest, what is the matter,’ and poor Mrs. Wyndham wrung her hands in agony and fear, seizing her daughter in her arms and clasping her to her breast as she spoke.

‘ Don’t be alarmed, dearest mamma,’ said Blanche affectionately, and with some confusion. ‘ I’m not hurt. We were met in the lane by—by two men,’—she was about to say who they were, but checked herself, ‘ and frightened a little, but were fortunately rescued from them by——’

With a strange kind of embarrassment

Blanche paused, while Patrick O'Brien instantly finished the sentence by adding :

‘ His honour the colonel an’ mysilf, plaise yer ladyship.’

Mrs. Wyndham started at the sound of Patrick’s voice, and stared at William Haverty, whose face was partially concealed by his travelling cap and large cloak, with a kind of half-terrified, half-doubting look, for a few moments, as if uncertain of his bodily reality, as she exclaimed : ‘ What ! Blanche, who is this ? Is it his ghost or am I dreaming ? Speak ! Are you William Haverty ?’

‘ Sure, an’ it’s all that remains o’ his honor, ma’am,’ said Patrick half to himself, seeing that his master’s own emotions prevented him replying so quickly as usual.

‘ I am indeed, Mrs. Wyndham,’ he returned holding out his right hand, removing his cap from his head, and throwing his cloak from his shoulders at the same time, thereby displaying the loss of his left arm about half way above the elbow, while an exclamation of painful surprise broke from both mother and daughter at the sight : ‘ you see,’ he added with a smile, as she shook him warmly and agitatedly by the hand. ‘ I have left one arm in India.’

‘ Oh, thank God ! the report that you were killed was not true !’ cried Mrs. Wyndham fervently. ‘ But come in,’ she added leading the way toward the room she had just left. ‘ You must stay a few minutes with us. When did you arrive ?’

‘ Only a few minutes since, I only got in London to-day in time to catch the midday train ; and knowing that it had been reported and was generally believed that I was killed in our last engagement with the rebels, near Lucknow, I was anxious to be the bearer of the news, that I was still alive, to my friends in my own person : and lost no time in endeavouring to do so. But owing to some delay on the line, we did not reach Westdon till quite dark, when I and my servant at once started from the station to walk home to my father’s. We came by the foot-path across the fields, and had just reached the narrow lane which leads into the main road, when we heard piercing screams and loud cries for help, and, rushing forward, to my great astonishment, found Blanche and her attendant struggling with two scoundrels, who I strongly suspect—for we heard it driven away immediately afterwards—had a carriage of some kind, to convey one, or both, of them

off, and would most probably have succeeded, but for our timely arrival and rescue.'

'Oh, the wretched villains!' exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham, with a terrified look. 'And you couldn't tell who they were?'

'Tell who they were!' cried Patrick, whose feelings of indignation would not allow him to remain silent any longer. 'Sure an' it was no other than that murtherin' villain Murray, an' the ruffian Bilson, that did that same.'

'Murray!' cried Mrs. Wyndham, starting and turning pale, glancing first at her daughter and then at Colonel Haverty.

'Yes, it was indeed that scoundrel, for I cannot call him anything less, and a low accomplice of his who committed this outrage upon your daughter,' said the latter, in a tone of calm, restrained indignation.

'Good God! and he has waylaid my daughter and tried to carry her off, and force her to marry him against her inclination!' rejoined Mrs. Wyndham, trembling with agitation. 'Where was Mr. James Ingram that he did not see you home, as it was so late, dear?' she asked her daughter, after a moment's pause.

'He went out before tea and had not returned when I left,' replied Blanche.

In a moment William Haverty suspected that Mr. James Ingram was in some way or other concerned in this disgraceful affair also. And yet, mean as his opinion of him was, he could hardly believe that he was such a scoundrel as to personally assist Murray in trying to carry off a lady who had been paying a visit at his own house. He was rather disposed to think that he had gone out somewhere else on purpose that he might not have to escort Blanche home, after having let Murray know she was to be there, leaving him to make use of the information as he thought fit. However, he considered it best not to say anything upon this point at present, and after a short pause remarked :

‘So my father and mother do not know that their son is not a dead man after all !’

‘How glad they will be to know it ! And how glad I am for their sakes, too, as well as yours and our own, that it isn’t the case,’ said Mrs. Wyndham, earnestly ; ‘and I know you are anxious to see them and to convince them in your own person of the truth of the glad tidings you bring. Their grief has hung heavy upon them since the dreadful news reached them,’ she added.

‘Oh, my good, dear parents !’ said William, deeply moved. ‘Then the letter I sent, informing them of my safety, has not reached them. I feared as much, when I found you did not know I was still alive.’

‘No letter has reached them, or they would have been sure to give us immediate intelligence of it,’ said Mrs. Wyndham.

‘Then I know you and Blanche will excuse me now,’ he returned, with a fond, half-regretful glance at the latter at being compelled to deny himself the happiness of a longer stay ; and with an affectionate longing in his heart to see his beloved parents. ‘I shall come in the morning and give you an account of all my adventures, and hear all your news,’ he added, cheerfully.

‘Well, unwilling as we are to let you go so quickly, we mustn’t attempt to detain you to-night. We shall look for you soon after breakfast ; good-night,’ said Mrs. Wyndham.

‘Good-night,’ he replied, shaking her by the hand. ‘I shall be here early in the forenoon,’ he added, taking hold of Blanche’s hand as he spoke and pressing it warmly in his. ‘Good-night, dear Blanche,’ he ventured to say ; ‘I hope you do not feel any bad effects from your late danger ?’

‘No, not in the least. The effects are very, very pleasant, I assure you,’ she replied, with an arch, tender smile. ‘I was a little frightened at first, when I was seized by that horrid man; but now I feel quite well and very happy. Good-night. Do not be late in coming to-morrow morning, dear William,’ she added, in a lower tone, looking him affectionately in the face.

‘No, dearest, you may depend upon my being here early. Good-night,’ he rejoined, raising her hand to his lips and touching it with a loving kiss; after which he quitted the room, joined Patrick in the hall, and hastily pursued his way toward the house of his father and mother.

CHAPTER XXI.

To attempt to give anything like a description of Colonel and Mrs. Haverty's feelings of joyful surprise and happiness on seeing their son is beyond our power. No words could give expression to the rapturous emotions which filled their hearts, as they once more, and so unexpectedly, clasped him to their fond, warm hearts, in the full consciousness that it was indeed their own only and beloved son they held in their arms, and not his unsubstantial shadow as they had at first been half disposed to think it was, when he so suddenly and startlingly stood before them. They received him as from the dead ; and looked upon his return with scarcely less surprise and pleasure than if he had actually come back to them from the grave. And if anything could increase the colonel's satis

faction, it was the loss of his son's arm. Mrs. Haverty felt like a tender mother for the wound of her son, and her husband was not without a due share of a parent's sympathy for him in this respect ; but he felt in his brave old soldiery heart that the maimed limb of his gallant son was a trophy far more glorious than if he had come home with a coronet on his brow ; and a distinction more honourable than any queen or emperor could bestow. Proud as he was of his son's gallant achievements and well-won honours, he was prouder of this than them all ; and not the less so that it corresponded so well with his own wound. The only difference was, he jokingly said, that the Sepoys had been more considerate with his son, with all their reputed inhumanity, than the French had been with himself, with all their boasted politeness and courtesy, and left William the use of his right arm, whereas the latter had taken his right from him, leaving him only the use of his left.

After the first glad surprise was over, and Mrs. Haverty had got some refreshment placed before her son, and the colonel and she had seated themselves on each side of him, he briefly related what had occurred to

him since his wounds in the battle of Lucknow.

For some time, very little hope was entertained of his recovery, but, with the skilful treatment of the surgeons, the continued attention and careful watching of his faithful follower, Patrick O'Brien, who had waited on him day and night, scarcely ever for a moment either closing his eyes or leaving his presence till he was out of all danger, and the aid of a naturally good and healthy constitution within himself, which had neither been weakened by vicious indulgences nor impaired by effeminate habits, he rallied and gradually recovered.

As soon as he was able to be removed he was ordered off to Calcutta, as it was deemed desirable that he should be sent home to England as early as possible, to avoid the excessive heat of the summer which was already coming upon him, and to have the benefit of the more genial yet bracing air of his native country. But previous to his starting for Calcutta he had written home, informing his father and mother of his wounds, illness, and partial recovery. His letter, however, from some cause or other, had, unfortunately, never

reached them, and his rumoured death had, in consequence, remained uncontradicted. It was only when he got back to Calcutta that he learned this report had appeared in the newspapers, which had, no doubt arisen from Patrick O'Brien's first exclamation, when he fell from his horse, being heard, and literally understood by some one connected with the press, and communicated to the London papers accordingly. He had intended staying a short time at Calcutta to recruit himself a little after his long journey down the country, but, knowing the grief that this report must have caused at home, and greatly distressed on account of it himself, he took passage in a steamer which was to start two days after his arrival, and came off in her without losing a single hour. This had prevented his writing from Calcutta to inform them of his safety and returning home, as no letter could have reached them sooner than he did himself, having started with the first mail steamer and come by the overland route to Marseilles, from whence he had travelled by railway to Calais, crossed over to Folkestone, and on to London by railway again, where he had arrived just in time to catch a mid-day train to Westdon, having been urged

and impelled onward by some strange and mysterious influence which would not allow him to pause or rest till he had reached home. Giving them also a short account of his unexpected *rencontre* with James Murray, and his providential rescue of Blanche Wyndham from the power of that rascal.

This latter information filled his father with equal astonishment and indignation.

‘By heaven !’ exclaimed the old colonel, fiercely, his thick grey eyebrows lowering over his flashing eyes, his features working with emotion, and holding up his hand above his head—‘By heaven ! the villain deserves to be shot like a dog !’

‘There’s nothing could be too bad for such a base, wretched creature,’ said Mrs. Haverty. ‘I hope Blanche was not hurt in any way ?’

‘No. She was, of course, very much frightened, and fainted from the effects of his violence ; but she does not seem to have received any injury,’ replied the son.

‘She was, of course, so overjoyed to see you that she neither thought of nor felt anything else,’ rejoined the mother.

‘Well,’ said William, smiling, ‘she certainly did appear pleased to see me, and so did her mother. They were both a little

startled at first, and looked as if they thought I was a ghost or a spectre ; but, when they were really assured of my bodily existence, they seemed almost as much overcome with joy as they had been a moment before with surprise. However, Blanche will have no further anxiety on account of James Murray, at all events.'

' Well, I should think he is settled now, at any rate,' replied his father, laughing. ' Will Mrs. Wyndham take any legal proceedings against him, do you think ?'

' I don't know. I have promised to go to Bilford Hall soon after breakfast to-morrow morning, and then, I suppose, she will decide what is to be done.'

' Ay, William, Bilford Hall will have more attractions for you than your mother's house, now,' said Mrs. Haverty, with a half joking, half sad smile.

' No, dear mother, no place can ever be more attractive to me than the spot where you are,' he replied affectionately, laying his hand upon hers, and pressing it gently as he spoke. ' Besides,' he added, with a half-grave smile, from what I heard in India, only the day before I was wounded, I thought that Bilford Hall would have had a new prospec-

tive owner by this time. I heard it had been found that Mr. Wyndham had left a desire in his will that Blanche should marry James Murray, who was doubtless quite willing to comply with so easy a way of getting, one day or other, possession of the estate. But, from what I have already seen, that clause of the will does not seem to have been acted upon.'

In the midst of his illness, and during the whole of his journey home, this had never been absent from the mind of William Haverty, and sometimes weighed down his heart with a chilling sensation of blighted hopes and withered affections; the more so as he feared that his reported death might be taken advantage of by James Murray, or have induced Blanche, in a moment of despondency or grief, believing him to be dead, to yield to the persistent suit of that gentleman. But the strange encounter he had, and the excitement of his feelings since his return, had not only convinced him that he had no ground for uneasiness on the subject, but had almost driven it entirely from his mind; and it was only now that he thought of it.

' Well, there was something in Mr. Wynd-

ham's will to the effect that, on her marriage with James Murray, Blanche was to have ten thousand pounds, which would have been just the same as giving it to himself; but it implied no wish that she should marry him. Besides, it was made some time before Mr. Wyndham's death, when, I believe, he did wish for something of the kind to take place; and it was only a few hours before he died, as you know, that he saw what Murray was, and expressed himself so strongly against Blanche's ever marrying him,' said the colonel.

‘Then Blanche and her mother were still opposed to it, I suppose?’ remarked William.

‘Yes. Nothing on earth would ever have either induced Blanche to marry James Murray, or her mother to consent to it,’ replied the colonel, emphatically.

William Haverty's heart felt light and happy, and when it was time to retire for the night—it was nearly midnight before they separated—he went to bed calm and cheerful in spirit, and thankful to Him who had once more permitted him to return home in safety, and Who had still preserved to him so fair a prospect of future felicity.

CHAPTER XXII.

OUR tale is now nearly finished.

Furious with rage, galled with mortification and bitter disappointment at the utter and irreparable overthrow of his long-cherished dishonourable schemes to obtain possession of the fortune of Blanche Wyndham by frightening or forcing her into a marriage with himself; and covered with shame at the public disgrace which must soon follow the impending and inevitable exposure of his ignominious conduct; but, more than all, overwhelmed with fearful apprehensions of not only the legal consequences he had incurred by his violent outrage upon Blanche, but the physical and personal chastisement that might be inflicted upon him by William Haverty, should he happen to meet him, or even the colonel or General Fielden—for,

knowing their interest in the object of his insult, he was almost as much afraid of the wrath of the one-handed, fiery colonel, and the provoked indignation of the gallant old general, as of the terrible arm of our hero—James Murray, at an early hour next morning, left his mansion, disappeared from the country, and fled to take up his abode at an obscure sea-port on the opposite side of the English Channel, where he hoped to be in less danger than if he remained in England.

But he had another reason for making his escape from the country as speedily as possible, and seeking shelter in a foreign country. He was well aware that this total destruction of his matrimonial projects involved the complete and immediate ruin both of his social standing and worldly position, and knew that the moment Messrs. Ingram and Day heard of the return of William Haverty and this utter failure of all his plans and efforts to gain Blanche Wyndham, the utmost rigour of the law would be immediately put in force against him to make his ruin still more complete, and to recover, if possible, some of the money he had lately had from them, in addition to his old debts, for the purpose of

assisting his carrying out, as he had represented to them, his all but successful suit with Blanche Wyndham. For which purpose Mr. Ingram had advanced him five hundred pounds only the very day before, to enable him to meet the expenses of an elopement, which he said might be expected to take place between him and a certain young lady, whose mother and an obstinate old general had tried to persuade her from marrying him, but with whom he had made arrangements to make a pretence of carrying off against her will, when he had no doubt, as soon as they were gone and the marriage had taken place, everything would be settled and arranged to the satisfaction of all parties —especially as the money he could claim after that and the reversionary right he would have to a certain estate would enable him to repay or give fresh security for all the monies he had already received.

Much as the bank itself was in want of funds, Mr. James Ingram, in the desperate hope of Murray being successful in this scheme of abduction and forced marriage—for he knew very well what the other meant, and was also aware that Miss Wyndham was to be at his son's house that evening—had

actually, as we have stated, let him have five hundred pounds upon his promissory note, to enable him to carry out a scheme, which but for the opportune arrival of William Haverty, might have been at least partially successful.

But James Murray well knew that anything like leniency or consideration from Mr. Ingram was now perfectly out of the question, and felt that his only security against his vengeance was a timely retreat across the Channel and safe protection of the French laws. But even in this he was disappointed, and, though he was successful in flying from human punishment and man's wrath, he could not escape from moral retribution. Just as he was stepping from the steamer which had conveyed him from the English shores to the French coast his foot slipped, and he fell into the water beneath the vessel, and his body was not recovered for some days; and when found it was so disfigured and eaten by fishes that it could scarcely have been recognised even by those who had known him before.

His accomplice, Bilston, also fled from the country for fear of the consequences of his conduct.

The indignation of General Fielden when

he heard next morning of the outrage that had been committed upon Blanche Wyndham, was only equalled by his astonishment and joy at the unlooked-for return of William Haverty, whom he, with the rest of his friends, had long regarded as dead. Had William been his son he could not have been more delighted with the news, or more anxious to see him. He hastened off to welcome and congratulate him on the happiness in store for him the moment the glad-denning intelligence was conveyed to him, which had been done by Mrs. Wyndham's sending Eliza Fleming with a message to that effect early in the morning.

By-and-by it oozed out that the Ingoldsby had not only been aiding Murray in his disgraceful scheme, but were, to some extent, cognisant of his last audacious attempt to bring it to a successful issue. This of course induced General Fielden, without a moment's hesitation, both to break off all intercourse with them personally, and to give immediate intimation of his wish to withdraw his money from their bank, and to close his account there entirely, only regretting that his promise of six months' notice prevented him from doing so at once.

As the sum Messrs. Ingram and Day held of the General's amounted to, as we have previously intimated, fully twenty thousand pounds, this notice, coming upon them, too, as it did, on the back of their disappointment consequent on Murray's disgrace and flight, and the embarrassing position they were already in—which they had hoped, in some measure, to have been, partially at least, relieved from by that worthy's prospective possession of ten thousand pounds —came upon them like a thunder-clap, and filled them with the greatest consternation at the terrible prospect of impending bankruptcy, shameful disclosures, and ruin which was before them. Still they had six months to prepare for it, and were determined, till then at least, to carry things with as high a hand as ever; yea, perhaps even more so. In the meantime to make such arrangements for themselves and provision for their families, by the assignment of deeds, securities, and other properties as should leave them, under any circumstances and whatever might befall the bank and its creditors, well provided for. The crash, as may be expected, did come; and then it was that everyone exclaimed, 'Who would have thought it?' except the

few wiseacres, who always profess to have foreseen events after they have occurred, and who shook their heads and said they had long suspected something was wrong, and been prepared for the catastrophe.

Luckily for General Fielden, he had a good income in other ways, for he lost nearly the whole of the money he had in the bank, and though it was a heavy blow to him, he consoled himself—like a good and a wise man—that he had still sufficient for his comfort and subsistence, and like a true one, that whatever he had himself lost by his indiscreet confidence, he had been the means of saving for Mrs. Wyndham the large sum that was in the hands of the bankers belonging to her, after the death of her husband. And although he submitted to it bravely and cheerfully, still it was hard for the gallant old man to be compelled to put down his carriage and lessen his expenditure by reducing his establishment in his old age, as he now found it necessary to do, after so severe a loss as that which he sustained by the unprincipled conduct of Messrs. Ingram and Day.

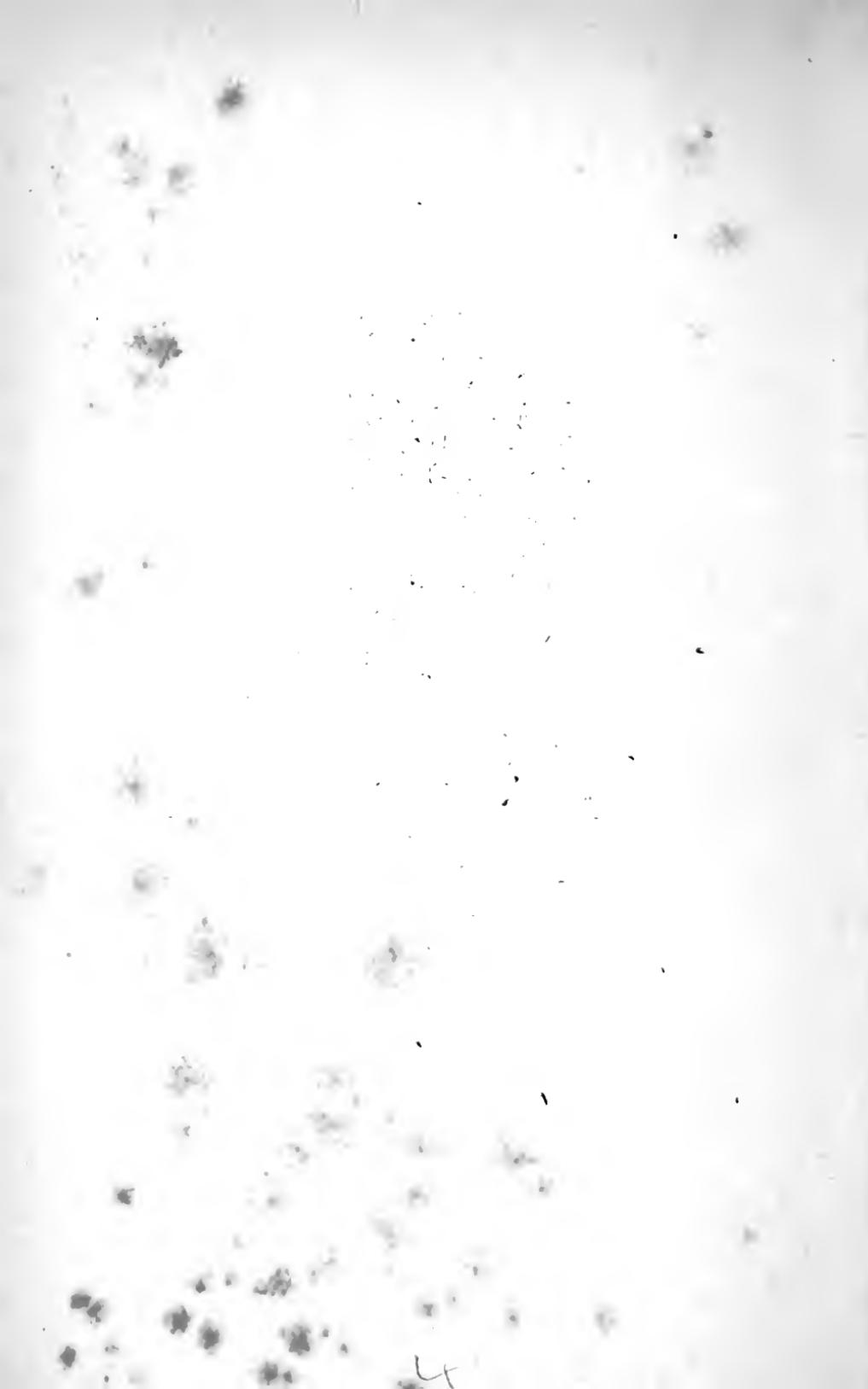
But before this occurred, William Haverty and Blanche Wyndham had been united in

Bilford church by the worthy vicar. General Fielden gave away the bride, and did not forget presenting her with a handsome wedding gift on the occasion.

Patrick O'Brien too, by the express wish of both his master and Blanche Wyndham, was married at the same time by the vicar, to the pert saucy housemaid, Mary Packer, and was installed as butler and general factotum at Bilford Hall, where Colonel Haverty and Blanche took up their residence after their marriage ; nor did the versatile and amusing Irishman prove less useful, faithful or attentive in this capacity than he had previously done as the follower of his master in foreign climes, and amid the dangers of the battle-field.

The whole village and neighbourhood were full of rejoicing and good wishes for the health and prosperity of the happy couples, to which we give our most hearty response.

THE END.





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